

# JAMAICA JOURNAL

20/3

QUARTERLY OF THE INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA



*Marcus Garvey Centenary  
1887-1987*

20<sup>TH</sup>  
YEAR  
1967-1987



# Treasures of Jamaican Heritage

Donated by  
Roy and Grace Williams

## Bamileke Chief's Stool

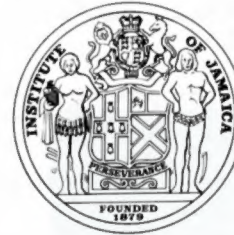
Among the interesting artefacts in the African collection at the Mico Museum is this intricately designed wooden stool which belonged to a chief of the Bamileke tribe, Cameroon, West Africa.

Of particular interest are the carvings — three leopards and three men arranged alternately — which form the legs on which the seat rests. The leopards represent the qualities of physical force, speed, cunning, patience and an instinct for survival and symbolise the strength and power inherent in the chief. Carved in the wood above each leopard is a pelican which symbolises the Bamileke belief in an afterlife, as it is this bird which transports the spirit to the other world after physical death. The men represent tribesmen bearing gifts to the chief.

The stool was part of Dr Aston Taylor's INAFCA Collection of Indian, African and Caribbean artefacts which he bequeathed to Mico College.

The Mico Museum which is located at Marescaux Road in Kingston will be opened to the public shortly.

Courtesy Mico Museum



Jamaica Journal is published on behalf of the Institute of Jamaica 12-16 East Street, Kingston, Jamaica by Institute of Jamaica Publications Ltd.

All correspondence should be addressed to:  
IOJ Publications Ltd.  
2A Sutherland Road, Kingston 10, Jamaica  
Telephone: (809) 92-94785/6

**Editor**  
Olive Senior

**Assistant Editor**  
Maxine Patricia McDonnough

**Design and Production**  
Camille Parchment

**Typesetting**  
Patsi Smith

**Support Services**  
Faith Myers — Secretarial  
Eton Anderson — Accounting

**Back issues:** Most back issues are available. List sent on request. Entire series available on microfilm from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, U.S.A.

**Subscriptions:** J\$50 for four issues (in Jamaica only); U.S.\$15, U.K. £10.

**Retail single copy price:** J\$15 (in Jamaica only); overseas U.S. \$5 or U.K. £3 post paid surface mail.

**Advertising:** Rates sent on request.

**Index:** Articles appearing in Jamaica Journal are abstracted and indexed in Historical Abstracts, America: History, and Life, and Hispanic American Periodicals Index (HAPI).

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ISSN: 0021-4124

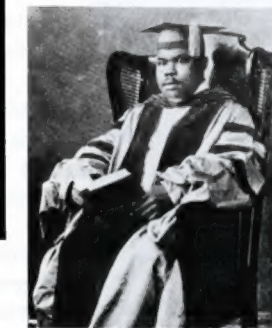
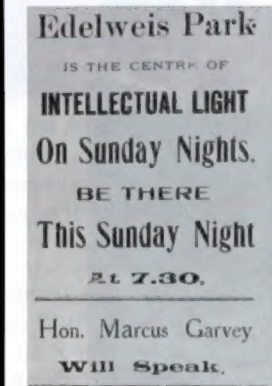
# JAMAICA JOURNAL

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Donated by  
Roy and Grace Williams

Vol. 20 No. 3

August - October 1987



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**COVER:** Artistic representation of the Rt. Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey by Heather Sutherland-Wade. Our entire issue is devoted to an examination of aspects of the Garvey life, legend and the heritage he bequeathed us. (To obtain a copy of our cover picture, see p. 9).



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# The Spirit of Garvey

## Lessons of the Legacy

By Rex Nettleford

A hundred years after his birth and nearly fifty years after his death, the spirit of Marcus Mosiah Garvey, visionary, freedom fighter and one of Jamaica's greatest thinkers, lives on. It is significant that of all the heroes iconised by a politically insecure people grateful for their independence out of some three centuries of struggle, Marcus Garvey remains the most popular among the mass of the population. No surprise, really, since the issues he addressed persist with a vengeance, calling a dispossessed and groping people, if not to armed struggle, to exercise of imagination and intellect as the route to freedom and self-determination.

Among the heirs of Garvey are the popular poets of utterance — the Bob Marleys, Jimmy Cliffs, Peter Toshes and Mutabarukas — thrown up by a generation of Jamaicans who find in the tangible emblems of political sovereignty no real solution to their people's continuing degradation which is the result of Western civilisation's unrelenting efforts to humiliate Africa and all that spring therefrom.

Garvey's redemptive vision of a tolerable future where people of African ancestry will enjoy full recognition, status, and self-direction, remains one of the sturdiest challenges to a world that would keep large hordes of humanity in some kind of Babylonian captivity with poverty, self-negation, and powerlessness as their daily medicine.

If the mental grasp of such disabilities is the first step towards liberation, then the ongoing and inescapable trek to final freedom must be through *action*. Garvey did not himself rule out armed struggle if, as in the Irish situation, such was necessary. But with the fullest understanding of the arenas of combat — Central America, the United States and his own little Jamaica — he turned to methods of

self-reliance rooted in confraternity, mass mobilisation and unity, as well as efforts at self-improvement by embarking on economic ventures that would generate resources for further development.

Nothing that we now invoke — from Bob Marley's call to emancipate oneself from mental slavery to the PNP's call for self-reliance and the JLP's stress on private initiative in economic development — escaped Garvey's insightful gaze on the realities of a poor, depressed state of existence which is the legacy of slavery and colonialism. He is a genuine founder of modern Jamaica, a true anti-colonial advocate for all of black Africa where he was well-known among those who eventually fought for Independence, and a creative intellect who offered to the entire process of liberation-struggle some of the tersest arguments and a way of looking at a world that would celebrate man's inhumanity to man over and above one man's obligation to another on the basis of mutual respect and mutual understanding.

The Rastafarians, on their own admission, owe a lasting debt to the man. Their repeated invocation of his wisdom and foresight is among their greatest assets, giving them a kind of credibility and relevance to an ongoing quest for universal brotherhood, democracy and freedom though not at the expense of the black man.

This search for space by people of African ancestry on the planet Earth is so fundamental in their day-to-day battle for survival, that its elemental nature is likely to be dismissed as metaphysical nonsense by the 'scientific' scholars, as an imponderable by the economists or as unimportant by the technocratic planners. Happily, the ordinary folk understand the force and vigour of the hope-in-despair it engenders in the breast of all who feel (and know). Sylvia Wynter, the Jamaican woman of



letters, has long understood the meaning of Garvey in these terms as part of a cultural process that has sustained the African in exile, variously designated 'proletarian', 'sufferer', 'member of the masses' or any other name that the going ideology will satisfy. She wrote in **JAMAICA JOURNAL** back in 1970 (4:2):

What Césaire was in the intellectual and cultural field, Marcus Garvey of Jamaica was in the political agitational field. His great organisation based in the United States and the massive plan for a physical return to Africa comprised the corollary of the spiritual and intellectual return of the Negritude movement. While the movement failed it has shaken up the fantasy and stirred the imagination of millions of black 'folk' in the United States and the Caribbean. His movement awakened an awareness of Africa, a revaluation of Africa, and a sense of pride in the past, whose myth had been used to keep black people in servitude and self-contempt. This started the process which has led in a direct line to the present Black Power movement . . . .

The above correctly places Garvey as part of a process to which he gave much original impetus, a process that is now global in its application and universal in what it sets out to do. For the revaluation and renaissance of black culture (which is central to Negritude and the later Black Power movement) is a vain object without the consciousness of racial pride and the application of energy in practical schemes of self-improvement which Garvey and Garveyism espoused.

**T**he scholarly contributions to a fuller understanding of the life and work of Garvey, following on the efforts by the late Amy Jacques Garvey to preserve her husband's work, are in their own way responding to the reality of a world which the mass of the population have long understood, if only because they continue to be the woof and warp of that weave.

Robert Hill's extensive and impressive documentation, John Henrik Clarke's history and textual analyses of the man's work, Tony Martin's driving pursuit of Garveyite caverns yet to be explored, Rupert Lewis's long-awaited examination of Garvey as anti-colonial champion, and Rupert Lewis and Maureen Warner-Lewis's recent collection of essays on Garvey<sup>1</sup> all attempt to bring up-to-date the voluminous store of information left to posterity by Garvey and those who helped to give the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) the tremendous significance it was to have for millions all over the Western world in the decades of the twenties and thirties.

These scholars are beginning to confront us with the full significance of the giant of a thinker-cum-activist that Garvey was. The substance of his philosophy and opinions as well as his dreams and pro-

grammes of action, his errors and achievements, his successes and failures, retain an awesome relevance to us almost eighty years after his entry into public life — that is if we are to date that 'life' from the fateful and historic printers' strike of 1908 in which he was involved.

For the realities with which Garvey wrestled, and which are alive with us today, are indeed those elements of human interaction which many a social scientist would conveniently relegate to the dustbin of 'imponderables', but which real-life experience knows are often the deep social forces on which may depend the production, distribution, and exchange of a bushel of corn, a truckload of yams, a bunch of bananas, so many crate loads of ganja, a tonne of bauxite-alumina, or even a latter-day container of high-tech winter vegetables. No doubt there are those who share with Garvey the view that internalised notions of racial (or class) inferiority are self-limiting and do not a producer of goods and services make! This is not to turn Marx on his head though either way it would still be Karl Marx. The balkanisation of consciousness is after all the greatest enemy of social change in any ideological dispensation.

No one knew better than the self-educated but exceptionally discerning Garvey that the organic and dynamic interplay between material conditions and ideas emerging from those conditions, between material base and ideational superstructure, is the stuff of human existence *in praxis*. And what he in turn has bequeathed to us, as a result of his long and sustained engagement with such phenomena, has proven to be quite capable of Explanation and Theory (the dream of the 'scientific' investigator) even while providing mythic inspiration for Black Power activists and race-conscious visionaries.

There remains a rich storehouse of knowledge yet to be tapped and organised into palatable shape. And the quest continues for some conceptual order in the current confusion of shifting paradigms beckoning us all to appropriate structural frames, works not only to support our public policies but also to hone our methodological explorations in dealing with the unruly and chaotic phenomena that are the reality of contemporary Jamaican and Caribbean life. There is room for everyone — empiricists, humanists, positivists, and even mystics — in this quest.

Marcus Garvey understood the problematique very well. The 'earthly existence' he grappled with was not a simple, uncluttered, and 'one-way-street' affair. Garvey in fact responded directly to the contradictions, diversity and chaos of his colonial, plantation-American, economically lopsided and racially bigoted world with the vigour and the sensitivity demanded by the criss-cross complexity of human life anywhere. In fact it is precisely because a group of imperial overlords refused to accord to a subjugated majority that fact of texture, diversity and complexity that he was forced not merely to interpret the world into which he was



**N**ATIONHOOD is the only means by which modern civilization can completely protect itself.

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MARCUS MOSIAH GARVEY

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born, but to change it.

He sought to establish in practical terms institutional frameworks on the basis of a philosophy of life, power and human organisation that was rooted in the realities of his native Jamaica and the rest of the black diaspora. It was a worldview which was, however, no less 'universal' than those claimed by men (of whatever race, class or cultural background) fighting for social justice, freedom and human rights. The inward stretch to race-consciousness as the basis for that mandatory inner psychological liberation and his outward reach into territorial borders beyond Jamaica and to minds beyond the 'black race', gave to his efforts the force and power it was to develop and maintain in his lifetime and after.

The 'universality' is based not only on the geographical spread of the Garvey Movement. The universality is based as much on the man's firm grasp of what up to now is demonstrably a fundamental human concern among peoples wherever there is injustice, calculated efforts to dominate subject peoples, exploitation of the labouring masses, racial discrimination and the denial of human dignity perceived in terms of what have been severally called 'inalienable', 'natural', or just plain 'human' rights. The persistence of Garveyism remains a source of energy in liberation struggles and strikes a responsive chord among the mass of the population in contemporary Jamaica as it did in large parts of Africa, the United States and the rest of the Caribbean throughout the twenties and thirties. Garvey's popularity today tells us more about contemporary Jamaica which still needs to be structurally adjusted out of its congenitally unjust state, and much as well about South Africa and wherever else people are treated as less than human.

The internationalism in the sense of territorial reach as well as the universality of the Garveyite ideas should not be played down. But neither should Garveyism be bled of its 'blackness' in order to make it respectable and parade as part of somebody else's mainstream. Happily, the books referred to earlier and the contributions to this issue of **JAMAICA JOURNAL** do nothing of the sort. They successfully document the activities of UNIA branches as far away as California, throughout what was then the British West Indies, in Africa (West and South), and through the international encounters with the League of Nations in the decade between 1921 and 1931. These accounts speak, as well, to the universality of Garveyism in terms of its ideational thrust as a worldwide liberation creed but filtered through the specific and real-life experiences of black people in the world, just as Plato addressed the specific problems of the Greek city-states he knew. Garveyism was to help *determine* Western mainstream ideas-systems, whether liberal capitalist, imperialist, or revolutionary socialist and not merely to *enter* them. Out of the specificity of the experience of the Jamaican peasantry and artisan class in the context of colonial Jamaica reinforced by the fact of Harlem (the capital of black America) and the existence of similar denigration of black people

he came upon in his travels in Central America, Garvey was able to formulate a view of the world no less valid because of the source(s) of its origin.

What an excellent lesson for those of us who still believe that if Marx, Keynes or Friedman did not say it, it wasn't said; or if it is not on CNN or MTV it does not exist! The lessons that Garvey has to teach us are legion.

**F**irst of all, there is from the experience of the Garvey Movement in the West Indies, the strong reminder of underlying unities rooted in the legacy of enforced African migration to the Americas and the sequel to that historic event. The Garvey Movement, through the UNIA, might well have served as rallying point for the commonality of historical and existential experience. But it came upon another reality of the region — the fractious state of consciousness and the persistence of foreign domination under which semblances of unity still tend to show themselves. So the Colonial Office saw us (and we accepted it ourselves) as the British West Indies, while today the United States Administration has conveniently scooped us up into a Basin. Colonial governors could ban the *Negro World* and deport troublesome Garveyites from island shores. Today the battle for the region's minds via satellites, theatrical evangelism, and scholarships to U.S. places of learning, is joined.

Indigenous efforts to capture the underlying unities of which the region's artists and the historians speak all the time are usually of brief duration — the very University of the West Indies, symbol of this unity, is in danger of disintegrating. Then, if we were nationalist in the sixties and socialist in the seventies we are now decidedly Reaganite in the eighties. In the thirties when we were 'British' not even the UNIA stood a chance, but try it did. We must now depend for some sort of unity on cricket, calypso, reggae and Rastafarianism which in a way provide continuity for what the UNIA started. Garvey would have found kindred spirits among these agents of regional unity. They are, not surprisingly, for the most part black, which is the aspect of unity Garvey would wish to focus on.

The influence of the UNIA and the Garvey Movement on an entire generation of West Indians who helped to bring shape and meaning to the society we have now inherited is very evident in the history of the movement as outlined in recent works. When I was working on what became the 1960 Report of the Rastafari Movement [Smith, Augier, Nettleford 1960] I was told by Dr. Arthur Lewis, who was the UCWI Principal then, that 'we are all Rastas'. I discovered that he had been brought up in a home where the doctrines of Marcus Garvey were taken very seriously.

## Appreciating our environment



Peter Reeson

**T**wenty-five years of Independence have made us a people conscious of the need and responsibility to protect and preserve our national heritage. This heritage spans our range of ideas, traditions, art and environment. Encapsulated in the philosophy of Marcus Garvey, one of our national heroes, is the powerful call to Jamaicans to conserve what is essentially ours for the good of every Jamaican.

Standing tall and proud in the Negril Morass is a unique part of our natural heritage, the elegant royal palm, *Roystonea princeps*. This particular palm is found only in western Jamaica and is the dominant species of a diverse and interesting stand of trees, shrubs and climbers which make up the royal palm forest. Up to only thirty years ago, this unique forest covered nearly two hundred acres in the southern section of the morass. Today, though still the largest remaining stand of this forest to be found anywhere in the world, it has been reduced in size to a mere 50 acres due to shortsighted and thoughtless action. If we are to value what is truly ours, there can be no acceptance of the destruction of such a uniquely Jamaican feature of the environment. Protection of this forest and all other aspects of our natural heritage must be the responsibility of everyone.

But conservation implies more than mere protection or preservation. Conservation in its fullest sense is management for wise use, not just for the few but for everyone. Therefore as a first step, we must come to understand the values inherent in our natural environment, such as the comfort it affords us and

the opportunities it provides for resource development and utilization. Secondly, we must vigorously pursue ways in which the environment may best serve our needs. In the case of the Negril royal palm forest, besides its obvious use as a conservation model for Jamaica, there are tremendous opportunities for visitor attraction, recreation and education. These uses, while being consistent with sound ecological principles, may also provide a means of income for maintaining the forest and for developing its resources.

The Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica is committed to wise management of the Negril wetlands of which the royal palm forest is an integral part. Since March, 1986, it has been developing this forest as a nature reserve. When completed in 1988, the reserve will provide a unique educational and recreational experience for residents and visitors to appreciate and enjoy. The first of its kind in Jamaica, the Negril Royal Palm Forest Reserve represents a milestone in national growth and development. It symbolizes a growing national consciousness for conservation of our natural heritage for the good of every Jamaican.

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I received similar acknowledgement from Azikiwe, one of the founders of independent Nigeria, only a few months after in Lagos, highlighting yet another lesson of Garveyism in its confrontation with imperialism. Many African anti-imperialists — from Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana to Nyerere of Tanzania — were in fact influenced by the teachings of Garvey. Garvey scholar Rupert Lewis has also made this point forcefully in his book *Marcus Garvey: Anti-Colonial Champion* [see review, this volume] and elsewhere [Lewis 1986]. The lesson is that we in the Caribbean and the wider neocolonial world ignore the anti-colonial struggle at our peril. It is no accident that Garvey's detractors equated his movement with that of 'Bolshevism' then under the direction of the Russian visionary and revolutionary, Lenin, whom Garvey, according to all accounts, admired immensely. The fact that Garvey's name spelt danger to all of the European imperial powers in the twenties and thirties testifies to the anti-imperialist image and thrust of his movement and beliefs.

The way out of colonial subjugation was not simply by rhetoric, however. Garvey's business schemes were practical efforts which sought to build a secure material base for his people as a means of escape out of crippling dependency. The schemes came to nought. But the courage, and bold determined steps taken by a man without the benefit of 'territory' is something that deserves the respect of those who, with all our control of territory, are hardly doing better. This does not of course rule out critical evaluation of and even scepticism about his naivete, lack of business sense and idealism. When he returned to his native country, he however demonstrated tremendous foresight and understanding of what is needed for a self-reliant, civilised society populated by a black majority. His party manifesto of 1929 for the 1930 Legislative Council election which he contested and lost, is a milestone in the decolonisation process of the Caribbean and other parts of the old British Empire. These far-reaching 'demands' by Garvey, turned on economic progress and reflected 'the intensity of the class struggle', legal and penal reform, and social and cultural development. These were of course to be recycled into the aims and objectives and plans of action of the region's first effective self-government party, the PNP of Jamaica. This makes Garvey a true founder of the modern and independent Commonwealth Caribbean, a fact which gets lost either in our historical amnesia or in the perennial and counter-productive efforts to prove Garvey wrong in the debate as to whether the problems of the black man turned on the issue of *race* or on the issue of *class*.

**T**he split between the Garvey Movement and the organised Left in the United States was probably

foreseeable but not totally unavoidable. And the lesson is one that should be seriously heeded by the progressive forces (so-called) in our own society today. Such progressive forces presumably include many a creative artist and student of the humanities who, as Garvey himself so well understood, are never afraid to allow the arts of the imagination to inform intellectual activity. That the political leader and the serious creative artist cross and criss-cross is evident in the inclusion of the products of artistic culture in Garvey's political activities — something echoed by Norman Manley two decades later in his own plans of action and vision for a self-governing Jamaica.

But back to the race-class controversy which showed up Garvey as a highly astute debater and a creative thinker. He emphasised the necessity of the denigrated African in exile, the New World Negro, to find his own vocabulary to describe himself and his situation, to discover his own institutional and operational frameworks as tools for redemption, and to work out his own destiny on his own terms. Being a proletarian was not simply the same thing as being a member of the black underclass in the Americas. The exploited worker and the denigrated African in exile presented the liberator of black peoples with serious perceptual and conceptual problems that had to be solved and on the black man's terms. Calling a spade a spade he no doubt found to be a mandatory obligation. The unfolding literature on Garvey gives clear insights into the sophistication of the man's intellect and the deceptively simple turn of mind he possessed — tactical adjustments from time to time, notwithstanding. He was, after all, a warrior in the trenches as well!

His ideas on the subject of the race or class issue were well formed from as early as 1916 [see Vincent 1986]. He told an impending visitor from the Tuskegee Institute in that year that in Jamaica 'the black people . . . form the economic asset', the labourers; while the coloured and whites were the upper classes. According to Garvey, one could 'quickly distinguish the exploited from the privileged; the dark-skinned being the former, the light-skinned being the latter'. Contemporary readers will quickly say that things have changed radically and that Garvey's world no longer exists. The verdict is naturally the reader's.

Garvey has also been quoted as saying that the Jamaican black had adopted 'his master's ideals, and up to today you will find the Jamaican negro unable to think apart from the customs and ideals of the old time slave masters' [Vincent 1986]. He was of course speaking about those blacks who consciously lived and had their beings according to the white man's agenda rather than creating their own. There are 'roast breadfruits' a-plenty among us still for that Garveyite observation to prick the contemporary conscience. And the 'functional white' and 'functional brown', having nothing to do with epidermal realities, are now a part of the social landscape.

Theodore Vincent's explanation of Garvey's seeming race-determinist categories is worthy of consideration. He feels that Garvey was convinced that exploitation was best understood in Jamaica in racial rather than class terms owing to the persistence of black/poor and white/privilege correlations. According to Vincent, Garvey felt it 'useful to interpolate the factor of race consciousness for class consciousness'. [1986 p.173]. With the advantage of hindsight one could supposedly take refuge in the theory of correspondences. So while to Garvey an upwardly mobile black would be seen as taking on 'an Aryan identity', a Marxist would describe the same process as the adoption of 'bourgeois ideology' by the socially mobile 'worker'. To Garvey such a person was a 'traitor to his race'; to a Marxist his working class counterpart would be a 'traitor to his class'. Where the black and the worker are the same person, it is double jeopardy.

Conscious of how we spend time fighting our battles with other people's AKs and M-16s, figuratively speaking, I made bold to suggest a few years ago that for the serious socialists in the region 'race and ethnicity must be worked into the Marxian dialectic to meet the realities of Caribbean existence'. Otherwise 'yet another theory from Europe will have failed to deliver the goods simply because we would have ignored Marx's own injunctions, by not relating our efforts sufficiently to the specificity of Caribbean history and realities'. [Nettleford 1979 p.8].

I was therefore happy to discover in the recently published *Garvey, Africa, Europe, the Americas* [1976] the following passage that actually ends the book [p.194]:

In the long run the biggest loser in the historic black nationalist/communist-socialist split has been the labouring black man the world over. The black man will not win the freedom without nationalism; and nationalism will not liberate the black unless he is thoroughly socialistic.

What a timely lesson for us in our present state of psychic disarray!

## Notes

1. For details on these works see pp. 93-99, this volume.

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## A Centenary Souvenir

A limited number of offprints of the portrait on our cover are available from our office for J\$5 each (U.S. \$1.50 or U.K. £1 postpaid). In full colour on art paper suitable for framing. Same size as cover, with all lettering removed except 'Marcus Garvey Centenary: 1887-1987' (see above).



# International Aspects of The Garvey Movement

By Tony Martin

**M**arcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association was an international movement of massive proportions. At its height in the 1920s it contained over twelve hundred branches in over forty countries. Its membership spread to almost every nook and cranny of the world where African people lived in appreciable numbers. In many areas where there were no organized units of the association, individuals could still be found who considered themselves members in spirit and who subscribed to Garvey's principles.

The UNIA is clearly without equal as a Pan-African mass organization. In several individual countries where it existed it was, in addition, the largest mass political organization locally. In Dominica, for example, there were about 800 members in the early 1920s. It is unlikely that any other political organization in the island would have exceeded this figure. The UNIA's newspaper, the *Negro World*, also had a larger local circulation than all of Dominica's papers combined.

In Trinidad and Tobago at about the same time, there were over thirty branches, spread all over the country. The nearest thing in the country to a political party, the Trinidad Workingmen's Association, contained only fourteen branches. Nor were the UNIA branches necessarily small. Several had memberships of over a hundred and the headquarters division in Port-of-Spain once recruited over a thousand new members in a one-month period.

In the United States, where there were over 700 branches, it is universally conceded that the UNIA was the largest mass movement in Afro-American history. The New York local alone boasted a membership of 40,000.

Had Garvey succeeded in his attempt to transfer his headquarters from Harlem to Liberia, his followers would, at

one fell swoop, have exceeded the total Liberian electorate. For it was Garvey's intention to take with him several thousand Afro-American and West Indian families, far more than the less than 5,000 persons allowed to vote in Liberia at that time.

When viewed from the perspective of broad geographical regions, the international scope of the UNIA is also highly impressive. In the Caribbean area the UNIA accomplished a feat that has hardly ever been attempted by any other political organization, let alone equalled. The UNIA built a truly Pan-Caribbean movement cutting across political and linguistic boundaries, something very unusual in the history of this region. From Spanish-speaking independent Cuba with its fifty-odd branches (second only to the United States), to the Dutch colony of Suriname, the Garvey Movement swept through French, Dutch, English and Spanish speaking territories, quite oblivious of differences in political status.

It is unlikely whether any other political organization in Central America cut across borders the way the UNIA did, as it blazed a course from Mexico to Panama. On the African continent too, the organization provided a common thread running through South and Central Africa and encompassing also countries in West and East Africa. The Belgian Congo (Zaire), French Senegal, British Nigeria, the dominion of South Africa, ex-German Namibia and the Portuguese possessions were but some of the countries reporting UNIA activity whether in the form of organized branches, individual adherents or groups of interested persons.

With a branch in far away Australia, the UNIA could if it so wished, have boasted along with the British Empire that it was an organization on which the sun never set.

Despite Garvey's unprecedented success, the UNIA did not represent any-

thing new in the history of scattered Africa. It belonged, rather, to an ancient tradition of Pan-African enterprise that went back at least as far as the late eighteenth century. In Afro-America, Europe and the West Indies, pioneer voluntary associations among freed Africans had long looked towards re-establishing links among Africa's dispersed peoples. Free Afro-Americans in Rhode Island had investigated the possibility of an African return in the late eighteenth century. Free Africans from England had returned to Sierra Leone at about the same time, West Indian missionaries from Codrington College, Barbados had established themselves at the Rio Pongo in what is now Guinea in the 1850s.

In the late 1850s, the Jamaican Robert Campbell and the Afro-American Martin Delany journeyed to Abeokuta in modern day Nigeria in an effort to settle New World Africans there. Campbell later became a leading citizen of Lagos. A few hundred Barbadians emigrated to Liberia in the 1860s. One of them, Arthur Barclay, would eventually become president of the republic. The St. Thomas born scholar, Edward Wilmot Blyden, emigrated to West Africa in the 1850s and became in due course one of the African world's most revered scholars and an influence on the young Marcus Garvey. The Ghanaian, Chief Sam, travelled to the United States, built a Pan-African organization and, a mere two years before Garvey arrived in that country, transported a boatload of New World Africans to the homeland.

One of the most ambitious attempts at international African cooperation before the UNIA was provided by the English-based Trinidad barrister Henry Sylvester Williams. In 1900 Williams convened the world's first Pan-African Conference. It took place in London and was attended by over thirty delegates from Afro-America, Canada, Europe, the Caribbean and Africa. They



UNIA members in front of the office in Harlem, New York.



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NOTE: This Handbill dated March 25, 1917 — 51 years ago — is written evidence of Garvey's work. He focused the West Indies and its problems to world view and sympathetic scrutiny.  
—Amy Jacques Garvey, 1968.

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(From top): Shirley Chisholm, T. Albert Marryshow, Jomo Kenyatta, Malcolm X.  
Below: Garvey with friends (1924).

discussed the state of the race, established a journal and founded a Pan-African Association.

These were but a few of the precursors of Garvey and the UNIA. Garvey was aware of this history and was able to stand on the shoulders of the men and women who had struggled before him.

The international aspect of the UNIA was firmly entrenched in the four years preceding the establishment of the organization in 1914. During this period Garvey travelled extensively in Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe. He involved himself in the struggles of African people in several countries. In England he worked for the world's leading Pan-African journal, the *Africa Times and Orient Review*, edited by an African, Duse Mohamed Ali. Though he did not visit Africa, this journal kept him abreast of African history and current affairs

and brought him into contact with influential Africans.

Garvey founded the UNIA in Kingston a few days after his return home from England in the summer of 1914. He had been spurred into this venture by the international degradation of the race, observed during his years of travel. The international dimension was given prominence from the very start, with a constitution divided into local (Jamaican) and general (international) objects. The very first of the international objects was the establishment of a 'universal Confraternity among the race'. During the year and a half he spent in Jamaica before leaving for the United States in March 1916 he began, in a preliminary way, to reach out to an international audience. A report on the new organization appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor*, published in Boston, Massachusetts, and enquiries came in from

Antigua and the Canal Zone, Panama.

By 1918, after a period of preliminary organizing in the United States, the UNIA was poised to radiate rapidly around the globe. New York City, where the movement was now headquartered, contained a polyglot African community, of whom about twenty per cent were West Indian. There was also a sprinkling of persons from Africa itself and other parts of the African dispersion. Such persons, whether they joined the UNIA or not, would have helped spread word of the movement to their home territories.

Garvey's earlier contacts from his travels now came in handy as well. As word of the new movement spread he was instantly recognized and remembered in places like Costa Rica, Panama and England. In Panama the Universal Loyal Negroes, who had worked with Garvey,







*Black Cross Nurses (above) and other UNIA uniformed groups on parade in New York in the 1920s during the heyday of the organization. At left, from the top: The Garvey Militia; Royal African Guards and African Legion; Juveniles.*

joined the UNIA en masse. Paid 'traveling commissioners' and volunteer workers established and nurtured branches in many countries. Seamen, too, now began disseminating his message to the far corners of the world. Some were engaged by the UNIA but others needed no such official sanction. The Sierra Leone-born seaman, Ernest Marke, told this author that he never left New York bound for Africa or the West Indies without a cache of Garvey's newspapers. He procured them at his own expense and passed them around

wherever he went. He distributed many copies at Jamaican ports and did not even know, in the beginning, that Garvey was Jamaican.

The paper that Mr Marke distributed, the *Negro World*, itself played no small role in the internationalization of the Garvey Movement. Begun in 1918, it had by the early 1920s become the most widely circulated African newspaper in the world. Sections were printed in Spanish and French in addition to English and it carried news of UNIA branches and race matters of interest to people everywhere. It was effectively edited, well-written and informed and was a superb educational and propaganda organ. Each issue carried a front page editorial in bold type from Garvey and these messages were read around the world as gospel. The white press may also have helped spread the movement by hysterical stories such as one of Garvey preparing to land in Africa at the head of a large army.

There was another, perhaps less tangible reason for the rapid spread of the UNIA. This was the New Negro spirit of the age. The First World War of 1914-1918 had built up expectations among oppressed peoples. Statesmen such as President Woodrow Wilson of the United States indulged in much fanciful rhetoric about self-determination for subject peoples. What the African world got instead were vain sacrifices from its much-discriminated-against soldiers and intensified racism at the war's end. Black people around the world were angry and fought back bitterly. In 1919 alone there were hundreds of race riots in the United States, similar race riots in Britain and strikes and disturbances in Trinidad and Tobago, British Honduras (Belize) and Sierra Leone, among other places. In all of these places Africans fought back with a grim resolve. Militancy was the order of the day and the African world was ready for a militant ideology, such as that espoused by Marcus Garvey.

Garvey preached an ideology of African nationalism. With this message he was able to strike at a common denominator among African peoples the world over. Whatever their regional and local differences, African people were receptive to his basic nationalist philosophy of race first, self-reliance and nationhood.

Race first meant that African peoples



*(From top): Henry Sylvester Williams, Captain A.A. Cipriani, St William Grant.*





should put their self-interest first. They should see physical beauty in themselves, write their own literature and history, decide for themselves who their heroes were and who their villains should be and generally interpret their own reality. Self-reliance addressed the need for an oppressed people to be about helping themselves. Garvey feared and despised the dulling of initiative that came in the wake of perpetual dependence on charity. His Black Star Line Steamship Corporation, a spectacular effort at self-reliance, may well have attracted more people to the UNIA than any other single project spawned by the association. In the early 1920s the



*Marcus Garvey in 1922 in his uniform as president-general of the UNIA (left) and reviewing a UNIA parade (top). At centre is a section of the parade.*

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UNIA's business enterprises were employing over a thousand people in and around Harlem, the African section of New York City, where Garvey had his headquarters.

In nationhood Garvey sought to encourage the quest for political empowerment among African communities. He felt that Africa had a special role to play here. Still prostrate and smarting under the heel of a rampaging European imperialism, Africa's regeneration was crucial to the well-being of her far flung sons and daughters. 'A strong man is strong everywhere', Garvey said, and a strong African continent would lend psychological and material succour to African peoples wherever they might be. He saw a need for skilled and energetic Afro-Americans, West Indians and others domiciled outside the homeland to contribute towards Africa's resurgence.

This ideology was echoed by Garvey's followers around the globe and helps explain his impact on politically conscious elements on several continents. Many of the major political figures of the African world of the last few decades were directly or indirectly influenced by Garvey. Some remained steadfast to his ideas. Others became more conservative as the years progressed. All of them found in Garvey a significant source of inspiration in their formative years. Kwame Nkrumah, first leader of independent Ghana, testified in his autobiography to the overwhelming impact of Garvey's *Philosophy and Opinions* on his political development. As a young man in New York he attended meetings of the UNIA and West Indian nationalist organizations. Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya considered himself a Garveyite as early as the 1920s, when he was a member of Harry Thuku's Kenya African Union. As a student in London Kenyatta later lived in a house rented by Garvey for African students. Nnamdi Azikiwe, first governor-general of independent Nigeria, recalled in his autobiography his first copy of the *Negro World*. He was still a youth at the time but this chance encounter with Garveyism had a lasting effect on his political development. In South Africa in the 1920s much of the top leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) belonged to the UNIA.

In Afro-America, Elijah Muhammad patterned his Nation of Islam (the so-called Black Muslims) to a large extent

after the UNIA, of which he was a member. The Nation of Islam, begun in the 1930s, had by the 1960s become Afro-America's most cohesive and financially powerful mass organization. Muhammad's most famous disciple, Malcolm X, was the son of a UNIA organizer and attended UNIA meetings as a child. Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, the first Afro-American to seek the presidential nomination in a major party, attended UNIA meetings as a child in Brooklyn, New York, where her Barbadian father was a fervent Garveyite.

In the West Indies, St. William Grant, who helped provide an entrée for Alexander Bustamante into Jamaican politics, had previously been leader of a UNIA division in Brooklyn. T. Albert Marryshow, the grand old man of Grenadian politics and affectionately known as the father of West Indian federation, visited Garvey in the early 1920s. He also contributed a poem to the *Negro World*. The fathers of Errol Barrow and James Cameron Tudor, sometime prime minister and deputy prime minister of Barbados respectively, were both members of Garvey's Movement.

From his secure racial base Garvey could reach out in solidarity with progressive people of other races. He supported the Riffs in their struggle against the Spanish in Morocco and the Irish in their campaigns against the British. He eulogized Lenin on the death of the Soviet leader and he praised Gandhi in India. Garveyites scrutinized the rise of Japan to world prominence to see what lessons they could learn therefrom. Garvey corresponded with Captain A.A. Cipriani, the liberal white trade union and political leader in Trinidad. Ho Chi Minh, leader of the Vietnamese struggle against the United States, actually attended UNIA meetings in Harlem and contributed financially to the association. This was during a stay in New York as a young seaman. International solidarity for Garvey, however, was never at the expense of surrendering his base of power within his own community

If Garvey's influence and international contacts were far flung, then so was the opposition to his movement. As an African nationalist he incurred the hostility of both right and left forces. The imperialist governments considered him a threat to the stability of their colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere. They banned his publications, jailed and deported his emissaries and

passed special laws aimed at the UNIA. In the United States Garvey and the organization were subjected to hostile surveillance by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other agencies, both public and private. On the left, the Moscow-based Communist International waged a protracted campaign against Garvey, from New York to South Africa. They were opposed to African organizations, organized on the principle of race first.

Though this opposition eventually took its toll, none of it could prevent Garvey from building the most massive and successful Pan-African organization of all time. His international influence even spread beyond politics to the field of literature and the arts. The 'Poetry for the People' page of the *Negro World* in particular, weekly carried the work of poets unknown and famous, good and bad, from around scattered Africa.

Over all of this worldwide outreach presided a UNIA leadership that was almost as international as its membership. The high echelons of the organization at various times encompassed men and women from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guatemala, Panama, Jamaica, Antigua, Trinidad, Grenada, Haiti and the United States, among other places. In the International Conventions of the Negro Peoples of the World the Garvey Movement had an international parliament, where delegates came from far and wide to deliberate on issues affecting the race.

The international impact of Marcus Garvey and his movement are reflected to some extent in the celebrations underway to mark his hundredth year. The widespread celebrations, both official and unofficial, being held in many countries remind us of the extraordinary influence of the man, in his time and in ours.

**Bibliographical Note**

I have documented these assertions in a variety of places, principally:

- (1) **Race First; the Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association** (Dover, Ma: The Majority Press, 1986, first pub. 1976).
- (2) **The Pan-African Connection** (Dover, Ma: The Majority Press, 1984, first pub. 1983)
- (3) **Literary Garveyism: Garvey Black Arts and the Harlem Renaissance** (Dover, Ma: The Majority Press, 1983).



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## Marcus Garvey Cultural Activist

By Beverly Hamilton

Although Garvey is remembered primarily for his political activities and his strident message of racial pride and upliftment, his concern for cultural development was a thread which ran parallel to political activities for the entire span of his career.

Garvey like many bright rural youths drifted to Kingston in search of wider horizons and immediately became involved in the intellectual life of the city. He joined the National Club, a nascent political group and worked on its paper, *Our Own*, a fortnightly. Later he edited his own paper, the *Watchman*, thus starting on a lifelong career in journalism.

He also became interested in elocution and debates. The story is told that when he first tried to enter discussions taking place in barber shops and park benches, he was rudely rebuked and told, 'Country boy, shut you mouth!' The young Garvey was hurt by this stinging retort and set about learning the art of public speaking. He visited different churches every Sunday 'to get points in platform deportment and oratory' from the ministers. Alone in his room, he practised aloud what he had learnt, reciting passages and poems with appropriate body gestures. [Garvey 1963 p.6]. The lessons seemed to have paid off early. In 1910 he entered an all-island elocution contest, representing the parish of St. Ann, and came third overall. Around the same time he began to organize public speaking contests among the youths of west Kingston.

### The Early UNIA

In 1914 after travels in Central America and residence in England for nearly two years, Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).

Garvey struggled with his fledgling organization for two years in Jamaica with limited success. But even in those early days, cultural concerns formed a part of the activities. Weekly meetings usually included debates:

A debate on 'The Press or the Platform, which has the greater influence?' followed a finely read dialogue between Miss A. Ashwood and Mr. A. Daily entitled *Sixteen*. Mr. Marcus Garvey led

for the Press supported by Mr. Daily and Miss Ashwood, whilst Mr. L. Small led for the Platform supported by Mr. Fraser and members of the audience. When the issue was put to the vote, Mr. Small's side won with a large majority. Next Tuesday (6 Oct.) at 7:30 the association holds its next musical and literary evening to which members and the public are cordially invited. [Daily Gleaner 3 Oct. 1914].

As this report shows, there were regular literary and musical activities. One early report even stated that 'the object of the association is to improve the elocutionary and literary tastes of the youth of the community' [Daily Gleaner 14 Sept. 1914]. At another meeting a unanimous resolution was passed calling on the UNIA to establish 'a city band for discoursing free music to the people of Kingston, and especially playing in the Victoria Gardens three times a week and at such places as the citizens of Kingston might request for the benefit of one and all' [Daily Gleaner 8 Oct. 1914].

The early UNIA was asked to submit names of outstanding black men in Jamaica for inclusion in the publication of historical works by Dr William Ferris, M.A. of Yale University entitled *The African Abroad or his evolution in western civilization*. Among the names selected were those of Dr Robert Love to represent literature and oratory and Mr B. de C. Reid for music [Daily Gleaner 5 Jan. 1915]. The early UNIA also staged fund-raising concerts; held regular lectures at meetings — one such was given by Mr H.A.L. Simpson on 'The Abuse of the Jamaican Dialect'; held elocution contests (Garvey won one of these) and ran a library and reading room.

Garvey left Jamaica in 1916 for the U.S.A. in order to undertake fund-raising for his young organization. Mrs Garvey tells us that he had hoped to return to Jamaica to establish a trade centre and black cultural centre. [Garvey 1963 p.14]. What was planned as a five-month speaking tour turned into an eleven-year stay during which time the UNIA grew into the largest Pan African movement ever. The UNIA at its height had over 1,200 branches in more than forty countries. International

conventions brought thousands of people together. The UNIA also became more radical ideologically, preaching 'Africa for the Africans' directly to the masses, demanding an end to colonial rule and encouraging blacks to practise an assertive nationalism.

During this period cultural activities remained an intrinsic part of the movement. The UNIA had a musical director in the person of Rabbi Arnold Ford, a Barbadian by birth who composed the Ethiopian Universal Anthem, the anthem of the UNIA. The UNIA headquarters had a band and an orchestra. Liberty Hall in New York had a choir. Music was a part of regular meetings. Other divisions had choirs, bands, orchestras, drama clubs and literary circles. It is now being revealed that the Harlem Renaissance was influenced to some extent by the Garvey Movement.

Garvey's most famous and longlasting newspaper, *Negro World* (1918-33) became a vehicle for cultural activities. It ran book reviews, short stories, articles on literature, film reviews, reviews on plays and for a long time published a full page called 'Poetry for the People' which used poems sent in by members from all over the world, including the West Indies. Garvey had even tried to launch a *Blackman* magazine which would have been devoted to literature as well as political affairs. [Negro World 16 Sept., 14 Oct. 1922].

When Garvey returned to Jamaica in 1927 (after being deported from the U.S.A.) he brought with him a whole UNIA tradition of promotion of the arts. Even while he was in prison in the U.S.A., Garvey still indulged in artistic endeavours. He composed his most famous song, "Keep Cool", during this period. He also wrote a number of poems which were published by his wife Amy Jacques Garvey in two volumes, *Selections from the Poetic Meditations* and *The Tragedy of White Injustice*.

### Jamaica 1927 -35

It was during his stay in Jamaica 1927-35 that Garvey seems to have paid most attention to the arts. This period represents one of the bright spots in Jamaica's cultural history when the



headquarters of the UNIA, Edelweis Park, situated at 67 Slipe Road (now the offices of Wood's Hardware) became a major cultural centre, encouraging, nurturing and exposing some of the best talent in the island:

Marcus Garvey had been one of the first people in the 1920s to consider the public recreation and entertainment of the poorer people in the Kingston and St. Andrew areas. Edelweis Park was the locale for dances and the projection of new stage talent [Baxter 1970, p.296].

And so it was. Dances, dance competitions, elocution contests, recitations, dramatic productions, vaudeville, variety concerts, musical programmes of various sorts, films — this was the fare offered at Edelweis Park for the benefit of the general public. There were other attractions that were more purely entertainment — fairs, picnics, circuses, dress promenades, beauty promenades and sporting events such as boxing. Garvey himself wrote plays, poetry and songs. He was an avid collector of art and could be deemed a librarian of sorts. His newspapers the *Blackman* and the *New Jamaican* and later his magazine the *Black Man* published book reviews, poems, reviews of plays and concerts and articles on history. The noted black historian, J.A. Rogers contributed regular articles on African history.

The UNIA in itself was not without its fair share of dramatic and artistic import. There was pageantry and colour in the auxiliary groups — the Black Cross Nurses, the African Legion, the

Boy Scouts and Girl Guides (also called Juveniles); and not least of all in the attire of the president-general himself who wore gowns on various official occasions and special uniforms with plumed hat on extra special occasions.

### Cultural Policy

It was not by accident that culture played an important part in UNIA activities. Cultural development was an accepted fact at the policy making level by Garvey himself and within the highest echelons of his organization. It fell squarely in line with his doctrine of race pride and self-reliance. For him, culture was a tool of liberation, particularly of mental liberation.

Garvey encouraged those who used their talents to boost the morale of the black man while condemning those who, though talented, depicted the race in a demeaning way. He condemned Claude McKay over his novel *Home To Harlem* and accused him of being one of those guilty of 'prostituting their intelligence under the direction of the white man to bring out and show up the worst traits of our people'. He called the novel 'a damnable libel against the Negro'. [Negro World 29 Sept. 1928]. On the other hand, he stated in the same editorial; 'We must encourage our own black authors who have character, who are loyal to their race, who feel proud to be black and in every way let them feel that we appreciate their efforts to advance our race through healthy and decent literature'. This review was writ-

ten when Garvey was in Jamaica. He used to send editorial material to the *Negro World* on a regular basis.

Garvey gave strong support to one of Jamaica's most famous comedians, E.M. Cupidon. When Cupidon was about to leave for England for further studies Garvey wrote in an editorial: 'He is young and ambitious, he has a fairly liberal education, he has been trained to realise his responsibilities. We can therefore trust him as our Jamaican student exponent in England of his line of art'. [Blackman 14 June 1929].

It is also noticeable that Garvey's manifesto for the 1929 municipal election which he contested had some planks dealing with culture. A public library in the capital of each town, a national opera house with an academy of music and art, the beautification and creation of the Kingston Race Course into a national park similar to Hyde Park in London — these were some of the issues he promised to address.

At international conventions, there were sessions devoted to cultural topics: the 1934 convention had a session on art which Garvey himself chaired. He said that art was 'a very important subject . . . As much as we are trying to develop ourselves in business, religion, politics and so on, we have to build ourselves up in Art'. [Daily Gleaner 18 Aug. 1934].

Sometimes Garvey specifically encouraged creativity in national rather than racial terms when speaking of the

need for the development of a Jamaican culture. He spoke pointedly on this issue in a speech given at the Ward Theatre before the start of a programme of music and songs written by himself and Mr B. de C. Reid.

Garvey addressed the crowd thanking them for their fine turn out that afternoon to show their appreciation of local art. As he has said on the two previous occasions within the last three weeks, he felt that the time was ripe when they should bring out what was in them in poetry and music, things created by Jamaicans in Jamaica [Daily Gleaner 26 July 1934].

Three themes stand out in Garvey's cultural policy — that culture is an integral part of man's activities, that the black artist needs to have a sense of responsibility to his race and that the public needs to encourage its artists.

The practical implementation of this policy can be seen in many ways. The UNIA had a musical director, as mentioned before. UNIA meetings had a regular cultural component. In Jamaica there was a big meeting at Edelweis Park every Sunday night. There was a religious side to these meetings, with prayers and sacred songs. But there was another side with recitations, solos, orchestral music. By 1932 these meetings were described as a 'Forum of Education, Literature, Music, pictures and oratory'. Garvey would deliver an inspirational lecture and his oratory was certainly one of the attractions. He spoke on such topics as 'The things that make people great', 'The vision of success' or 'The heights of great men'.

Here is a description of a typical Sunday night meeting:

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Simeon E. McKenzie, 1st vice president and commenced with the singing of the opening ode *From Greenland's Icy Mountains* followed by prayers and the hymn *God of the right our battles fight*. Mr. Bellamy then read a lesson from the Scriptures, 2nd Corinthians chap. 5 1: 11 after which the band treated the audience to a selection of *Ernaur* and Miss Daisy Greenidge who was next on the programme for a recitation of *David's Lament for Absalom* made a wonderful impression upon her hearers. The interpretation was so perfect that the President General commented on it in glowing terms and congratulated Miss Greenidge. Miss L. Hewie who rendered *The Holy City* completely captivated the audience and Mr. and Mrs. George McCormack followed with a duet. Mr. Cecil Moore recited a panegyric on the Hon. Marcus Garvey and was vociferously applauded. *Cavaleria Rusticana* by the band, an anthem by the choir — *I was glad* — was followed by another selection. *Home Songs* ended the musical programme. [Blackman 27 April 1929].

The UNIA in Jamaica also sponsored various cultural events. There were two groups of Follies (dancing and chorus girls) at one time, later they seemed to have become one company; there was a UNIA band; two choirs; an orchestra and a jazz band. These were attached to Edelweis Park. At Liberty Hall, the home of the Kingston division of the UNIA, there was also a choir and a band.

Some of the units fell under the Edelweis Amusement Company which was established in April 1931. It was capital-

ized at £15,000 with shares offered to the public at £1 each. This company had the task of managing the units, providing high class productions and seeking out local talent. At various periods, regular programmes were held. At one time the Follies appeared every Monday night and every Tuesday there was a public dance. There was a monthly concert of the Follies, orchestra and choir. Throughout all this there was the regular Sunday night meeting. There was also a Kingston Amusement Company established by the Kingston division to promote cultural activities.

We will now look in more detail at some of the art forms that were encouraged by Garvey and the UNIA.

### Drama

Drama is probably the art form which received the greatest impetus from the Garvey Movement in Jamaica. Garvey himself wrote plays which were performed at Edelweis Park though one informant says he remembers seeing one at the Ward Theatre. So far seven have been identified and these are mainly of an historical or political nature: *Roaming Jamaicans*, *Slavery from Hut to Mansion*, *Coronation of an African King*, *Let My People Go*, *Ethiopia at the Bar of Justice*, *A Night in Havana* and *Wine Women and Song*, a musical.

*Roaming Jamaicans* depicts the life of Jamaicans as immigrants living in the United States, Panama, Costa Rica and other Central and South American countries, their life abroad and return to Jamaica. [Blackman 16 Aug. 1930].

To-night! To-night!  
WONDERFUL  
MOVING  
PICTURE  
SHOW.  
**Uncle Tom's Cabin.**

Showing the NEGRO in America during the days of slavery. A Wonderful Home-Plan picture.

YOU CAN'T FAIL TO SEE UNCLE TOM & LITTLE EVA

A TWO MILLION DOLLAR Production on the screen

AT EDELWEIS PARK, 67 SLIPE ROAD.

THURS. NIGHT 6<sup>th</sup> MARCH FROM 7.30 TO 12 M.

ADULTS 1s. - CHILDREN 6d.

National Library of Jamaica



Claude McKay

Edelweis Park

IS THE CENTRE OF

INTELLECTUAL LIGHT  
On Sunday Nights.

BE THERE

This Sunday Night

At 7.30.

Hon. Marcus Garvey

Will Speak.



Daisy Greenidge

THREE GREAT DRAMAS

TO BE STAGED AT  
EDELWEIS PARK

67 SLIPE ROAD  
WRITTEN BY THE CELEBRATED PLAYWRIGHT  
DUNCILLON MAYCUS GARVEY

These Plays have drawn and inspired thousands

THEY WILL BE PRESENTED AS FOLLOWS

THE CORONATION OF AN AFRICAN KING

MONDAY NIGHT 18<sup>th</sup> AUGUST

Roaming Jamaicans

TUESDAY NIGHT 19<sup>th</sup> AUGUST

SLAVERY FROM HUT TO MANSION

WEDNESDAY NIGHT 20<sup>th</sup> AUGUST

A WONDERFUL HOME-PLAN PICTURE

THEY WILL BE PRESENTED AS FOLLOWS

THEY WILL BE PRESENTED AS FOLLOWS



This play had six acts and twenty-one scenes and according to one ad, it had been dubbed 'the play of plays for Jamaicans' [Blackman 5 July 1930]. *Slavery from Hut to Mansions* is described in its blurb as 'a revelation of the horrors of slavery. It depicts the slave traffic in full swing, the agitation for freedom and Emancipation and progress after'. [Blackman 16 Aug. 1930]. It had a cast of 120.

*Coronation of an African King* was said to be the dramatization of the work of the UNIA. It had three acts, with scenes in New York, Washington, London, the West Indies, Dahomey, Senegal and the Sudan. The plot consists of an attempt by imperialist forces of the world to stop a worldwide movement which is gripping black people and which according to the introduction 'passed to its climax of the coronation of an African king'. [Blackman 21 June 1930]. Contemporary international characters such as David Lloyd George of England, the U.S. secretary of state and the French premier were involved. But, as can be imagined, the black organization won out. One of the highlights of the play is a great battle scene between the imperialist forces of France and the revolutionary forces of the Sudan under the leadership of African generals. In classical style, the battle takes place off stage. [Blackman 21 June 1930].

*Let My People Go* was set in slavery. One informant remembers that in the play some of the slaves felt that they should be free to go to Africa instead of remaining in the West Indies. They

eventually succeeded in going back to Africa. This play also had scenes of guerrilla warfare as in the Maroon wars.

Besides these plays, Garvey is credited with writing at least three mock trials — one a murder trial, another a divorce case and the third based on his own trial in Jamaica.

Garvey not only wrote plays, he directed them. One informant, Mr Roy Carson, reported that Garvey 'drilled you night and day. Sometimes you had rehearsals twice per day'.

Other persons staged plays at Edelweis Park — UNIA members and non-members. Ranny Williams who credited his early career to the influence of Garvey, was probably the most important theatre figure to come out of Edelweis Park. We know of at least five plays which he wrote and produced there — *She's a Sheba*, *Blacks Gone Wild*, *Landing the Landlord* (described as a comedy farce), *King Belshazzar* and *Old Black Joe*. There are references to a number of other untitled farces and monologues which he performed. For example, an ad for a special Easter Monday show promoted five different farces written by Ranny Williams, every one presenting a different genre — comedy, pathos, tragedy, pantomime and minstrelsy. [Blackman 22 April 1930]. Among the persons appearing regularly in his plays were his brother Roxie, Harold and Trim, Racca and Sandy, Eldora Myrie — a dancer from the Follies, and Lurline Huie, the famous UNIA soprano. One feature which stands out is that the

artists functioned at different times as actors, singers, dancers and musicians. Ranny Williams himself started out dancing at Edelweis Park. He describes how he got into drama there:

I was first a hooper (back line dancer). Soon I was a frontliner and then a feature dancer with partners in front of the front line. A large UNIA conference was being held and Mr. Garvey gave me permission to sit in on sessions. My observations later formed the basis of successful monologues I performed imitating some of the more eccentric and popular delegates.

Ranny also sang and composed songs. One song he wrote was called "The Dog-flea Song" which he sang to the tune of "Bye Bye Blackbird". [Blackman 10 June 1929].

The great impersonator and comedian Ernest Cupidon staged at least one play at Edelweis Park. It was a mock trial called *Uncle Fixam's Trial* (from his conviction on the charge of practising obeah). The cast was as follows:

Judges of the high court — Councillor Marcus Garvey, Dr E.C. DaCosta and T.R. McMillan

The Prisoner — Mr E.M. Cupidon

The Attorney — Mr. P.N. Blake  
Attorney for the Defence — Mr Ken Hill

Cupidon appeared regularly at UNIA concerts, often as the star attraction. He received tremendous support from Garvey who on several occasions editorialised on his art:

Mr. Cupidon is a comedian and that in no secondary sense. He has a genuine

native faculty for the art. We admire his ambition and the pride which he stirs to perfect his art. [Blackman 2 May 1929].

Musical comedies and vaudeville shows were also staged, with the Follies as the main presenter involving singing, dancing and some acting. Some were written by Gerardo Leon, their director. *Smiles and Kisses*, *Finding a Wife*, *Pep and Ginger*, *From Smith Village to Constant Spring*, *The Girl from Linstead*, *Good Gracious Annabella*, *Fifty thousand Pounds* were some of the titles.

Plays were also performed at Liberty Hall by UNIA members. Mr Sidney Gray, an officer of the UNIA in Cuba and later of the Kingston Division wrote a number of these plays. One was *The Slave Ship* which dealt with the Middle Passage. Mr Gray recalled that during one of the scenes where slaves were tossed unceremoniously overboard to lighten the vessel, Madame de Mena, the international organizer of the UNIA, fainted and her husband had to take her home. Of interest is the fact that Mr Gray was associated with some of the famous comedy teams, especially Bim and Bam. He said that he helped Bim to write *A Gun Court Affair* in the 1970s, thus providing a link between Garvey's work and modern popular theatre.

#### Dance

The UNIA also fostered the art of dance. There were two companies of Follies at one time, later known as the Follies of Edelweis. The Follies did various kinds of dances, mainly in the

popular vein. They performed at UNIA concerts, sometimes appeared in scenes in a play, and also performed outside of Edelweis Park. They were trained by Gerardo Leon who had had showbusiness experience in New York. At a later time, Arthur 'Sagwa' Bennett also trained this troupe. The Follies were known popularly by terms such as the 'Black Follies' and the 'Ziegfield Follies with the Palm Beach Tan'. These were definitely one of the most popular groups at Edelweis Park. One of their performances was 'punctuated with loud applause throughout in so much that the actors had to stop countless times in their parts to allow the vast audience to laugh to their hearts' content and show their appreciation'. [New Jamaican 2 August 1932].

There were also dance contests at Edelweis Park. In 1930 there was a marathon contest lasting a whole week. Twenty couples were selected each night with 100 on the final Saturday night. Dancers competed in various categories — classical, rustic, tap, apache (including the old time gig), quadrille, waltz, tango, and lindy hop. [Blackman May 1930]. Among the famous dancers who performed there was 'Kid Harold' who up to the time of his death in 1985 was well-known as a tap dancer. He remembered regular Saturday night dance contests with money prizes and the performance there of a rumba queen.

Edelweis Park and Liberty Hall also functioned as the night clubs of their times. Often there was dancing after concerts. It was not unusual to see ads

like this: 'Extraordinary vaudeville — Follies and Musical Programme at Edelweis Park — 7:30 to midnight — Dancing after musical programme'. [Blackman 22 June 1929].

And dancing could take place quite spontaneously, as this report of an Easter Monday carnival (fair) illustrates:

Edelweis Park, the Mecca of Kingston and St Andrew coloured pleasure seekers bore the aspect of a Venetian Carnival when hundreds of gaily attired men, women and children 'strutted' on the dancing pavement or paraded freely around, fully imbued with the spirit of the sportive season.

The strains of jazzy syncopation flung out by the peppy orchestra seemed to cast an hypnotic spell over the dance-mad youths promoting frenzied demonstrations of the very latest steps. Mamas and papas gazed on, bedevilled at the mad career of sons and daughters freed from the blank drudgery of home life and the harsh and depressing monotony of routine. The spirit of revelry was rampant, old men and boys, young moms, dames and maidens danced with utter abandon. [Blackman 4 April 1929].

#### Music

Music formed an important part of UNIA activities. The UNIA had its own musical director at one time, its own national anthem, its own songs and its own hymns. Edelweis had a band which performed at concerts, Sunday night meetings, plays, on parades and at entertainment activities such as picnics and fairs. Edelweis Park also had two orchestras — a concert orchestra and a jazz orchestra. There were two choirs — a

A GREAT REVELATION OF  
"THE PLAY OF PLAYS FOR  
JAMAICANS"

A Live Human Drama  
ENTITLED  
"Slavery from Hut to Mansion"

Written by the celebrated Playwright,  
MARCUS GARVEY  
AUTHOR OF

The Coronation of an African King  
and Slavery from Hut to Mansion  
AT  
EDELWEIS PARK  
67 Slope Road.

Mon. Night, 21st July.

This play depicts the life of Jamaicans  
from the time of the first settlement  
to the present day. It shows the life of  
the early settlers, the struggle for  
freedom, the life of the early settlers,  
the struggle for freedom, the life of the  
early settlers, the struggle for freedom.

This will be a wonderful Education for  
the People  
80 CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY  
Staged Under the Personal Direction Of The  
HON. MARCUS GARVEY

See the life in Colon—see the things done in  
Port Limon and in Harlem—New York.

Come and hear the conversation between  
Florence Green and Henry Williams, two  
typical characters in Colon.

Come and see West Indians arrested in New  
York for Drinking a Bottle of J. Wray and  
Nephew's Rum.

Come and see a Gardener Boy from Jamaica  
making love to his former Mistress in  
America.

You can't miss the Live Drama that has a  
much attraction for  
European men and women who are.

This Play was a wonderful success last  
Monday and Tuesday Nights! A Reputation  
is asked for.

GENERAL ADMISSION IS.



Ranny Williams

COMING! COMING! COMING!

A Gigantic Drama

"OLD BLACK JOE"

BY RANNY WILLIAMS

AT  
EDELWEIS PARK,

67 Slope Road

Monday Night, 12th Jan.

Under the Distinguished Patronage of His Marcus Garvey  
A rehearsal of the play will be given on the 11th Jan. at 7.30 p.m. and 8.30 p.m. Tickets 10c and 20c.



Gerardo Leon



Kid Harold

ONE WEEK OF  
MARATHON  
PRIZE  
DANCING  
AT  
EDELWEIS PARK  
67 Slope Road.

FROM  
Monday To Satur-  
day Night, 19th,  
20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd  
and 24th MAY.

7.30 TO 12 EACH NIGHT

250 in Prizes to be paid to  
the winners on the final



Arthur 'Sagwa' Bennett



concert or sacred choir and a secular choir — making five main musical units at Edelweis Park alone. Liberty Hall also had a choir. At special events all would combine for a performance, as happened at the spectacular opening of the 1929 international convention. The choir at Edelweis Park was directed by the noted tenor Granville Campbell and performed weekly at Sunday night meetings. According to Z. Munroe Scarlett who was a member of the sacred choir, training was rigid. Members had to attend five practices per week before being allowed to perform on Sundays. Practice sessions were held twice daily, once in the morning and again in the afternoon, making ten per week. Members could select any five to attend. For each appearance on Sunday they would be paid two guineas.

The most regular event for the musicians was the Sunday night meeting. At one meeting the choir sang "From Greenland's Icy Mountains", "God of the right our battles fight", "Abide with Me" and the anthem "Holy is the Lord"; the band played "Country Girl", "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Down South". In addition there was a cornet solo.

Some of the UNIA songs were marching songs or rally songs. Z. Munroe Scarlett summed up their effect: 'Our songs were to arouse the people to get out of their condition'. Cyril Stewart, an old Garveyite, remembers two of the most popular as "Listen to the voice of Garvey" and "All around the World" which were sung by the scouts. Like

most scout groups, the UNIA Juveniles had a drum corps (at least there was one at Liberty Hall) which took part in parades and concerts.

From 1931 a singing contest conducted on an islandwide basis was held at Edelweis Park and was open to sopranos, contraltos, tenors and basses. In the 1932 competition, Miss Myrtle Bennett came first in the soprano class, retaining her title (she still sings with the Diocesan Choir); second was Blanche Savage (who still performs) and third was Miss O. Fletcher. In the baritone section, first was George Bowen, who repeated his feat from the previous year; second was M.U. Porter and third was George McCormack.

Garvey himself wrote songs, the most famous being "Keep Cool" which was regularly sung at Edelweis Park meetings, especially by soloist Lurline Huie. Garvey received the endorsement of one of the best known musicians at the time — Astley Clerk [see JAMAICA JOURNAL 18:4]. One promotional piece in his newspaper had this to say:

Mr. Astley Clerk is one of Kingston's most humane and respectable characters — when he says anything it is worthwhile listening to if it concerns music. Mr. Clerk says the words of the song "Keep Cool" by Marcus Garvey is inspiring and the music is superb. This is a tribute. He has got down several copies at 1/- each. I hope members of the UNIA will buy them all today. [Blackman 18 May 1929].

Here are the words:

*Suns have set and suns will rise*

*Upon many gloomy lives:  
Those who sit around and say:  
"Nothing good comes down our way".  
Some say: "What's the use to try  
Life is awful hard and dry"  
If they'd bring such news to you  
This is what you ought to do*

**Chorus:**

*Let no trouble worry you:  
Keep cool, keep cool!  
Don't get hot like some folk do,  
Keep cool, keep cool!*

*Throw your troubles far away  
Smile a little every day  
And the sun will start to shine  
Making life so true and fine  
Do not let a little care  
Fill your life with grief and fear  
Just be calm, be brave and true  
Keep your head and you'll get through*

**Chorus:**

*Let no trouble worry you:  
Keep cool, keep cool!  
Just be brave and ever true:  
Keep cool, keep cool!*

*If they'd put you in a flame,  
Though you should not bear the blame,  
Do not start to raising cane  
Keep cool, keep cool.*

Garvey also published in 1934 his Universal Negro Improvement Association Convention Hymns which

included hymns written by Garvey and Arnold J. Ford as well as some traditional numbers. One of them was "Jubilee", written no doubt as a tribute to the centenary of the abolition of slavery.

*Come what may I'm free to dwell  
Where the sun and stars do shine;  
Never more can slavers sell  
This triumphant soul of mine.*

There are five other verses.

We have already mentioned a concert of songs written by Garvey with music by Mr B de C. Reid, at one time director of the Jamaica Military Band which was held at the Ward Theatre.

From time to time, articles on music would appear in the *Blackman* and the *New Jamaican*.

**Public Speaking**

Perhaps the art form which Garvey loved most was that of elocution and debate. It certainly was the one he practised the most as he was the principal speaker at weekly UNIA meetings wherever he lived. His oratory was world famous and he was once described as 'the Demosthenes of the Negro people' by an old Garveyite who himself is a skilled orator. Even his enemies gave him credit for this art.

As was mentioned before, Garvey at an early age practised the art of elocution. When he founded the UNIA, elocution and debate were incorporated into regular programmes and continued as part of UNIA activities in the United

States. By the time Garvey returned to Jamaica, he was a seasoned orator of international fame. And he used his influence to foster this talent. Elocution contests were held at Edelweis Park for UNIA members as well as for the general public; some blossomed into all-island affairs with parish champions vying for national honours.

The *Blackman* gives this report of the 1932 contest:

Mr. E.M. Cupidon was able to retain his championship which he won for himself last year in a graphic presentation of *The Blacksmith's Story* and certainly deserves the place given him by the judges. Mr. H.O.B. Harriott who recited *Mark Anthony's Oration* was awarded second place whilst Mr. A.J. Greenidge, St. Catherine representative who presented *Chatham on the American War* was awarded third position.

Mr. Archie Lindo was heard to great advantage in his wonderful rendition of *The Shooting of Dan McGrew*. His delivery was of a very high standard, and it might be said that he painted the whole picture in his enunciation and excellent dramatising. He was given fourth position.

The *Impeachment of Warren Hastings* was recited by Mr. P.N. Blake who represented St. Andrew and this won for him the fifth position.

Elocution formed an important part of regular UNIA concerts and Sunday night meetings at Edelweis Park. Cupidon made regular appearances at both these activities. Henrietta Vinton Davis, the fourth assistant president-general of the UNIA who had gained fame as an

elocutionist before joining the organization, was another star attraction from time to time. Iris Lucille Patterson recited her own poems and was often commended by Garvey himself. From within the UNIA there was Daisy Greenidge, S. C. Lee, George Bowen and sometimes Gerardo Leon.

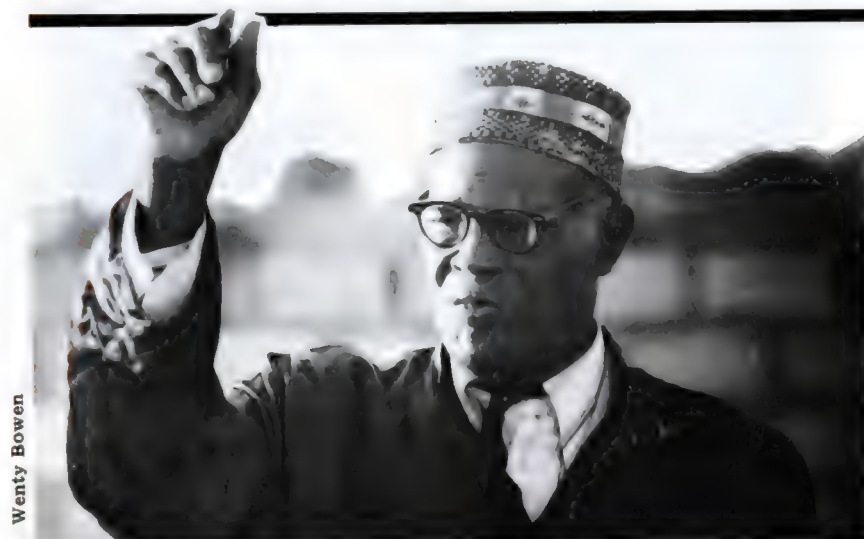
**Literature**

In the area of literature, Garvey functioned as poet, critic and promoter to some extent. He himself wrote poems. The topics were varied — religious, praise to the black women, African redemption, the race problem, death and what can be called inspirational — encouraging the readers to take hold of their lives and have confidence in the future. Garvey's poems are for the most part clumsy and pedestrian, harking back to a nineteenth century style; but they reveal some of his concerns. They could criticize narrow-minded people, as in "The Little Minds":

*The little minds that're in the world  
you know  
Are makers of most troubles that  
you see;  
So small in vision they will ever sow  
Confusion over land and foreign sea:*

They could express personal grief:

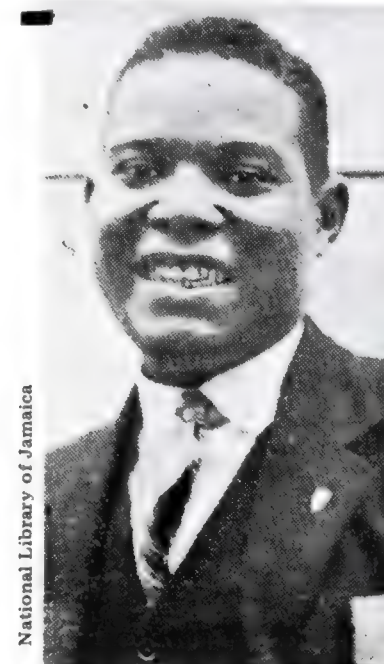
*Goodbye, my friend, in death we  
part,  
to meet in realms more glorious:  
A void I feel deep in my heart,  
For much there was of love in us:*



Z. Munroe Scarlett



Myrtle Bennett



Ernest Cupidon



Henrietta Vinton Davis



To see you go is awful pain,  
For thou hast been a world to me,  
But we shall meet for good again,  
To see the light that hallows thee.

Or he could exhort his reader to "Find Yourself":

To conscience go in quiet mood,  
And find yourself each morn  
anew

Feed thou upon the psychic food  
That makes the gods in mortal hue:  
This is the way that men are great —  
All those who smile with Nature's  
laws —

So then, why brood and curse your  
fate?

Brace up and strike against your  
flaws!

Garvey printed some of his poems in the *Blackman*, sometimes in his column "The world as it is" or sometimes as front page editorials, sometimes on the regular pages. The *Blackman* published poems written by others although this practice could never compare with what happened in *Negro World* which at one time had a full page of poems from readers, "Poetry for the People".

Garvey was a strong supporter of the development of Jamaican literature and the editorials of his newspapers sometimes were in the form of book reviews. For instance, there was a review of the anthology *Voices From Summerland* which was edited by J.E. Clare McFarlane in the issue of the *Blackman* of 3 May 1930.

Another editorial entitled "Jamaican Literature" dealt with a number of issues relating to literature. It encourages readers to purchase a copy of *Jamaica's Jubilee* by five authors which had been published originally in 1888. The book chronicles the progress of ex-slaves in that fifty-year period. The editorial then encourages the purchase of the latest book by J.E. Clare McFarlane.

If Tennyson is poet then Clare McFarlane is; the difference is only in degree. Every Negro should possess and read Mr. McFarlane's little book of poems. It will be necessary to read and re-read the book in order to fully assimilate the thought and meaning.

The editorial also praises the work of Arthur and Eva Nicholas for their lyrical quality; Tom Redcam whom it says 'has produced many poems of high literary merit'; Claude McKay whose 'efforts in verse are a worthy contribution in dialect to Jamaican literature'; Una Marson whose poetry is described as being 'Meritorious and she makes a like claim in the matter of prose' and Constance Hollar. Finally, the editorial praises the work of the Jamaica Poetry League for 'inspiring a love for poetic literature'. The League's task in compiling an anthology of verse was highly commended.

The *Blackman* at one stage carried a column "Chats on Literature" written by L. V. Henry which included among other things, a survey of English literature, a commentary of Elizabethan literature and a discourse on the work of Edmund Spenser.

Associated with this love of literature was a love for reading. It is reported that Garvey kept an extensive library. Roy Carson who used to visit Garvey's home weekly to work in the library gives this account:

Every Thursday I used to go to his house to re-arrange his library. He was a man who didn't sleep more than three to four hours. He would read himself to bed . . . Garvey had a complete library. Garvey had his library arranged according to subject matter. His books used to come in five or six shipments in cases . . . You had men like Audley Morais (who was running the Palace) who used to go there for research; Abraham Dolphy; some ministers also. They would make appointments through his secretary and his wife would be informed. He had books on science, history, African history, religion, art. Willie Henry used to go to the library. At that time the only library was the Institute and one at Church St. and Water Lane (the Atheneum) — Garvey used to send me there sometimes. Rev. T. Glasspole, Rev. A.A. Barclay (a Baptist minister), used to go there as well.

#### Art

Garvey was also a lover of the plastic arts — painting, sculpture, ornaments, ceramic pieces and antiques. He was known to keep a large collection of paintings and art work, especially African art. Mrs Garvey gives us an insight into this side of Garvey:

He had no recreation, as it was dangerous to go to theatres, so his idea of relaxation was to go around to antique shops and buy these old pieces. When he brought them home he would spend time and patience placing them in the right setting, colour scheme and ef-

fective lighting. Sometimes other objects had to be removed and new positions found for them. He enjoyed sitting in an easy chair and contemplating the beauty of the setting he had created, or the exquisite workmanship of a "Satsuma" from Japan, a "Delph" vase from Holland or the delicacy of an egg-shell goblet [Garvey 1963, pp. 179].

It is significant that when he was leaving Jamaica for London, one of his first instructions to his wife was to crate two large paintings, one an oil painting of himself.

'Somali Court' his home on Lady Musgrave Road had a statue of an African queen. This raised some suspicion that Garvey was practising obeah and one day the statue was stolen, only to be found days later broken in several pieces. That was to break Garvey's supposed occult faculties or practice.

Art was one of the topics down for discussion at the UNIA 1934 Convention. Garvey himself chaired the session and said that art was 'a very important subject but probably not realized by a large number of people, particularly of his group because it is a subject of culture rather than a subject of everyday occupation. One's civilization is not complete without its Art, the highest form of expression of human intelligence. That is my interpretation. Art is the highest form of genius'. [Daily Gleaner 18 Aug. 1934].

The *Blackman* carried articles on art — general discussions as well as reviews of exhibitions. Garvey himself once

used his column in the *New Jamaican* to encourage readers to visit an exhibition at the Jamaica Mutual Assurance Society's building which had been arranged by Astley Clerk. The *Blackman* also carried an article on sculptor Alvin Marriott, praising his art and giving a brief sketch of his career.

Mr. Marriott who must be termed the 'Michael Angelo' of not only Jamaica but of the West Indies has been showing his talent as a polished sculptor and finished artist by his numerous works of Art that have been gaining the praise and approbation of even the fiercest critics. [Blackman 26 Sept. 1929].

Marriott himself was an admirer of Garvey and had visited his home to do a sketch. Garvey, he reported had a very busy schedule and so could not sit for too long but he managed to get 'a nice profile of him'. Marriott of course was later to do more than one bust and statue of Garvey including the one at the shrine in Heroes Park and the life-size statue in St. Ann's Bay. 'Garvey was a cultured man. He had brilliant ideas. As an artist I am dedicated to Garvey as I am to no other', he has stated.

A word on Edelweis Park as an entertainment centre will round off this discussion. The park did function as an entertainment centre with fairs, coney islands, picnics, dress promenades (similar to fashion shows), beauty displays (for attractive women and men), games. Later there were films and the crude introduction of radio. The latter seemed to have been no more than the use of an

amplifier and microphone. But concerts were held behind the microphone and Garvey at one time even introduced a news service to broadcast the latest news. In 1933 there was a major policy decision to run Edelweis Park along similar lines as continental amusement parks with activities every night.

There will be radio programmes, orchestral music, popular entertainers, side-shows, games and dancing. There will be a variety of stalls, restaurants, lunch rooms and refreshment parlours. [New Jamaican 3 Oct. 1932].

The Edelweis Park activities received endorsement from no less a person than the director of famous American movie actress Marlene Dietrich, Mr. Josef von Sternberg who with a party of Hollywood luminaries visited the site shortly after the inauguration of the Night Life programme. He was said to be 'loud in his praise of Edelweis Park.'

#### Conclusion

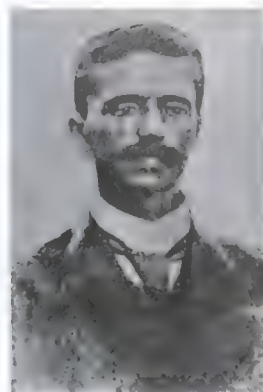
Garvey formed an important link in the cultural development of Jamaica. He encouraged local talent, he encouraged local productions, he set up professional cultural groups; his movement helped to train people, and most of all it gave them a sense of purpose and direction. This marks one of the unknown sides of Garvey.

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J.E. Clare McFarlane



Tom Redcam

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Sidney Gray by Kevin Sinclair and Beverly Hamilton 1984.

Kid Harold by Kevin Sinclair 1984

Keith Blackburn by Beverly Hamilton 1986

Theophilus Brandford by Beverly Hamilton 1986

#### Notes on Informants

**Keith Blackburn** was the manager of Blackburn's Educational Film Library and worked as a prop manager at Ward Theatre for several years. Though not a member of the UNIA, he knew Garvey personally, worked on the renovation of Edelweis Park for the 1929 convention and attended functions at Liberty Hall. He died in 1986.

**Theophilus Brandford** was president of the Kingston Division of the UNIA in the 1960s-70s. As a boy he was a member of the UNIA boy scouts group which was attached to the Kingston Division. He performed at UNIA concerts. Later he became the general secretary to Robert Hinds, one of the early Rastafarian leaders.

**Roy Carson** worked as a mail clerk for eight years at Edelweis Park. He also performed duties at the Garveys' home weekly.

**Vivian Durham** was associated with the Kingston Division of the UNIA. He was active in citizens associations, politics, debating clubs and journalism. He acted as Garvey's campaign manager in two elections. He was a founding member of the BITU.

**Sidney Gray** was an officer of the UNIA both in Cuba and in Jamaica where he was attached to the Kingston Division. He was a scoutmaster for the UNIA and other groups. He wrote plays for scout concerts, lodges and UNIA concerts. He died in 1984.

**Iris Patterson** was a contralto and elocutionist and poet in the UNIA. She wrote several poems which were published in the **Blackman** and was a regular participant at Sunday night meetings at Edelweis Park. She still writes poetry and a collection was published by Bilongo Press of Montreal in 1978 under the title **Look for Me in the Whirlwind**. She wrote a pamphlet in the 1970s called **Marcus Garvey As I Knew Him**, which was published by the Rasta Movement Association.

**Z. Munroe Scarlett** was a vice president of the Kingston Division of the UNIA and was founder and executive secretary of the Whitfield Division. He was a member of the sacred choir and helped in Garvey's election campaign in 1930. He started in journalism with Garvey's **Blackman** and later went on to work at the **Gleaner**, **Jamaica Times** and started two papers of his own, the **Negro Voice** and the **Jamaica Advocate**. He played a major role in the 1938 labour uprising at the Kingston waterfront in securing Bustamante's release and was involved in early trade union and political party activities. He is commonly referred to as one of Jamaica's 'unsung heroes'. He died in 1984.


**Harold Smith**, better known by his stage name of Kid Harold was one of Jamaica's famous entertainers, known for his tap dancing, an art which he practised right up to the time of his death in 1985. In the '20s and '30s he was a part of the comedy team, Harold and Trim.



Frank Gordon



Vivian Durham



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**AMY ASHWOOD  
GARVEY**  
1895-1963

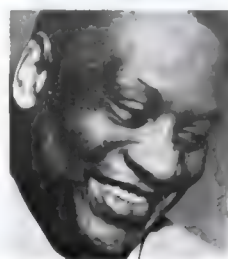
CO-FOUNDER OF THE UNIA  
WRITER-LECTURER-FEMINIST



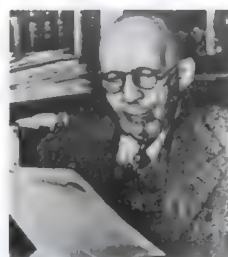
C.L.R. James



George Padmore



Paul Robeson



W.E.B. Du Bois



Adam Clayton Powell

Photographs of Amy Ashwood Garvey  
against the backdrop of her tomb in Calvary  
Cemetery, Kingston.

# Amy Ashwood Garvey

## Wife No. 1

By Tony Martin

**T**he political career of Marcus Garvey is unrivalled in many ways. In size and international impact his movement is without equal in the history of Pan-African activity. In the honours heaped upon him since his death and in the efforts by many to elevate him to the status of prophet he occupies a position rarely equalled by great leaders. In his private life Garvey proved to be no less unique than in his public career. For it was his fate to marry two women with the same name, from the same place, who were best friends and roommates. As if all of this was not enough, his second wife, whom he married in 1922, had previously accompanied him up the aisle, as it were, as chief bridesmaid at

the first wife's wedding. Wife No. 2, in her capacity of private secretary to Marcus Garvey, had also gone along on the honeymoon of Wife No. 1.

Wife No. 1, Amy Ashwood Garvey, was the loser in this eternal triangle. She nevertheless played a brief but important part in the history of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and went on to live an exciting storybook life of her own.

Amy Ashwood, born in 1897 in Port Antonio, Jamaica, was a precocious child who grew up into a talented, attractive woman of expansive horizons and boundless energy. Not

content with marrying one of history's great leaders, she lived a romantic and erratic life that brought her into close contact with important political figures in the Caribbean, Afro-America, Africa and Britain. A restless figure, she lived or sojourned in Jamaica, Panama, the United States, England, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago and Las Palmas, among other places. Throughout her adult life she never remained in one country for longer than four years. Hers was an adventurous life of perpetual motion.

Amy was a mere seventeen years old when she met Garvey in July 1914. Garvey had arrived back home to Jamaica only a few days earlier. After four years of almost constant travel in Latin America and Europe, Garvey was on the verge of founding his organization. He had been impressed on his travels by the sorry condition of Africans around the globe and was convinced that only through the power of organization could the situation be alleviated. Already a veteran debater and a practised public speaker, Garvey dropped in on the weekly debate at the East Queen Street Baptist Church hall in Kingston. There, just an anonymous face in the crowd, he was immediately captivated by Amy, a principal speaker for the afternoon's proceedings. The fact that he was ten years her senior seemed to matter little as he heard and watched her defend the proposition that "Morality does not increase with the march of civilization". Forceful in love as in political activity, Marcus accosted Amy at the tramcar stop after the debate and lost no time in expressing his admiration. When, a few days later, the UNIA was founded, Amy Ashwood became, according to her testimony, the first member apart from Garvey himself.

Amy was already well-educated and worldly wise. She had lived in Panama and in Jamaica she had attended the Westwood Training College for Women. Before long she plunged into the work of the fledgling organization. She helped organize dinners for the poor of Kingston. She visited the sick in hospital. She travelled with Garvey on his organizational lectures. She took part in debates sponsored by the UNIA and recited the poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar at UNIA meetings. She became secretary of the UNIA's ladies' division.

Garvey left Jamaica in 1916 for what he thought would be a short visit to the United States. Instead, he remained eleven years and became a world figure. Amy, too, left Jamaica around this time, but for Panama. Contact between the two remained at best intermittent for two years, though Amy says that they had become engaged before departing on their respective journeys. In Panama Amy established a relationship with a new paramour, one Allan Cumberbatch. Cumberbatch, born in Barbados but previously resident in Trinidad, was a dapper businessman in his thirties, even older than Garvey. This relationship would later contribute to the ending of Amy's marriage with Garvey.

Amy in due course appealed to Garvey for financial assistance to leave Panama and joined him in New York in 1918. By this time the UNIA was well on its way to re-establishment in North America. Harlem had taken the place of Kingston as the association's headquarters, some small businesses had been founded, a newspaper, the *Negro World* was already appearing weekly, and Garvey was already attracting thousands to his regular meetings. Soon, the UNIA would be a massive international movement.

Amy picked up where she had left off in Jamaica. She

travelled around North America with Garvey and helped in myriad ways to build the organization. When in 1919 Garvey launched his most spectacular venture, the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation, Amy became one of its board of directors. Like Garvey, she was summoned before the district attorney investigating Garvey's 'radical' activities. She may even have helped save his life from the bullets of a would-be assassin in 1919. Amy and another woman helped to distract the intruder as he fired at Garvey.

A mere two months after this assassination attempt, Amy and Garvey were married. The marriage took place on 25 December 1919 at Liberty Hall, the Harlem meeting place of the UNIA.

The newlyweds left almost immediately for Canada. For Garvey it was to be a working honeymoon. In Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal he would make public appearances and promote the Black Star Line. Under the circumstances his private secretary, Amy Jacques, came along. Amy Jacques and Amy Ashwood had been friends from Jamaica. Ashwood claimed to have urged her friend Jacques to come to the United States and to have been responsible for her obtaining employment in the UNIA.

By February 1920 the marriage of Amy Ashwood and Garvey was on the rocks, less than three months after its seemingly auspicious inception. Garvey explained his disenchantment by accusing Amy Ashwood of serious improprieties and misdemeanours. She drank frequently, even in public, something which in the 1920s was considered scandalous for a woman with pretensions to respectability. At the Canadian border at the beginning of their honeymoon, Garvey claimed to have received the greatest embarrassment of his life when a customs officer found a concealed bottle of liquor in his new wife's luggage. The offending bottle had been packed without Garvey's knowledge.

Garvey also accused Amy of infidelity. She had continued to correspond with Allan Cumberbatch in Panama despite, he said, her promise not to do so. He also accused her of consorting with one of his own employees, a 'fashion plate' in the employ of the Black Star Line. He is said to have found her in the midst of a tryst with Sam Manning, a Trinidad calypsonian who in due course became a near-permanent fixture in Amy Ashwood's life.

Perhaps most damaging of all, Garvey accused his wife of dishonesty in the handling of money. The record indicates that she in all probability did misappropriate Black Star Line funds to purchase a house in Harlem.

Amy for her part claimed that she disagreed with some of her husband's political ideas and that he was too strongwilled. Most of all she blamed her friend Amy Jacques for her misfortune. Amy Jacques it was, she suggested, who tipped off Garvey to the tryst with another man. Amy Jacques, she said, had been sceptical about the UNIA at first, and had only converted to Garvey's vision when she saw the fame and fortune that surrounded Garvey. The fact that Amy Jacques and her estranged husband became closer friends after the separation seemed to confirm Amy Ashwood's worst fears.

Beginning in 1920, Amy Ashwood brought a series of legal actions for divorce, alimony and the like against Garvey. The major question of divorce remained unresolved and Amy Ashwood left the United States, first for Montreal and then





The Rev. Roy Campbell, S.J. who conducted the 'tomb unweiling ceremony' as it was called, with Mr Lionel Yard (right) who as a young man had known Garvey and who raised funds through the Friends of Amy Ashwood Garvey Association in the United States to have the tomb erected.

Left: Participants in the 'unveiling of the tombstone' of Amy Ashwood Garvey at Calvary Cemetery. Second from left is Mrs Ivy Constable Richards, a member of the local UNIA and a confidante of the late Mrs Garvey. Other Garveyites who can be identified in this picture include Mr David Cooper (third from left), Mr Vivian Durham and Mr Z. Munroe Scarlett (fourth and sixth from left, respectively). The three wreaths were from the UNIA, the Jamaica National Trust Commission and the U.S. branch of Friends of Amy Ashwood Garvey Association.

for London. In her absence Garvey established a fictitious legal residence in the state of Missouri. There he obtained a divorce and then promptly married Amy Jacques in Baltimore in 1922. Amy Ashwood never accepted that divorce and accused Garvey of bigamy for the rest of her life, but to no avail. She could not undo the damage that had been done to her legal claims on Garvey. Over the years she would often accuse Garvey, both in and out of court, of having divorced her illegally.

In England meanwhile Amy Ashwood began to strike out in her own independent activity. Much of her activity for the rest of her life would be similar to the type of work she had done in the UNIA. Like Garvey, she was by now an ardent Pan-Africanist and most of her life's work would be directed to the goal of forging links among African peoples and advancing their political interests.

In 1924 she helped found a Nigerian Progress Union (NPU) in London. Members included several prominent Nigerians, as well as other West Africans. Here, as elsewhere for the rest of her life, she found her association with Garvey helpful, despite the estrangement. Ladipo Solanke, secretary of the NPU was an admirer of Garvey.

Amy left London in 1924 and returned to the United States via Jamaica. In New York in 1926 she sued Garvey once more, this time for divorce on the grounds of adultery. Garvey was by this time in prison in Atlanta, Georgia, having been sentenced for a trumped-up charge of mail fraud. His lawyers nevertheless retaliated swiftly and devastatingly. They trapped Amy (or so she said) with a male friend in bed in a compromising situation that admitted of no plausible explanations. Garvey now cross-charged her with adultery and the suit ended in a stalemate, with no judicial pronouncement, one way or the other, on the validity of Garvey's

1922 marriage to Amy Jacques, Wife No. 2.

Amy, none deterred by this bad experience, picked herself up, dusted herself off and proceeded to make a little niche for herself in the history of Afro-American-produced musical comedy. She and Sam Manning collaborated on three shows, *Brown Sugar*, *Hey Hey* and *Black Magic* from 1926. The shows had limited runs at Harlem's Lafayette Theatre and in other cities. In 1929 Amy and Manning went on tour with a musical revue. This show visited Bermuda, Antigua, Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago and elsewhere.

Amy's life of wandering was now in full swing. By some strange coincidence she returned to England in 1935, the same year that Garvey moved there from Jamaica. Their paths crossed at least once. They saw each other briefly at a restaurant near Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park where Garvey liked to harangue the crowds.

With the aid of the ever-present Sam Manning, Amy opened a restaurant in London's West End. This eating place became a favourite haunt for London's Pan-Africanist activists. Such famous persons as C.L.R. James, George Padmore and Jomo Kenyatta gathered there, not only to eat the only good food in London (so said C.L.R. James) but to talk politics and plan their political campaigns. C.L.R. James has said that his organization, the International African Friends of Abyssinia, was founded in Amy's restaurant. Amy was herself an integral part of all the political happenings swirling around her restaurant.

Late in 1938 Amy returned to the United States for a short while and 1940 found her once again in Jamaica. Garvey died during this year and Amy seized the opportunity to take some posthumous pot shots at her erstwhile husband. She caused considerable upset in UNIA circles, with the membership ranging for or against her in her ongoing debate,



Front and back covers of a record produced 'in support of the Marcus Garvey Benevolent Association' and authorised by the first Mrs Garvey.

now with Garvey's ghost. She also began to pay more attention to women's concerns. She tried to found a School of Domestic Science, among other things, to train Jamaican domestics. Throughout her life Amy's fertile imagination gave rise to many such schemes, most of them potentially viable. In most instances, however, she lacked the finances, the drive, or the staying power to bring them to fruition. Amy also founded a political party, the J.A.G. Smith Political Party, named after a well-known Jamaican political figure. This seems to have amounted to little.

By 1944 Amy had already remained in Jamaica longer than she would ever again remain in any one place. And so she left for New York. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) kept her under close surveillance this time around. They burglarized her house and even searched her luggage, unknown to her, prior to her departure for England once more in 1945. The FBI now saw Amy as a possible communist. Some of her circle in London (C.L.R. James and George Padmore, for instance) were, or had been at some time, influential members of Marxist organizations. In New York also, Amy now began to associate with Marxists and persons such as Paul Robeson who were also under heavy FBI surveillance. Robeson, in fact, would eventually have his passport taken away and be banned from travelling overseas for his alleged communist sympathies.

Amy's outstanding activity in this period was her active participation in the election campaign of New York's first Afro-American congressman, Adam Clayton Powell. Yet, most probably because of the FBI's fears of her suspected communist sympathies, Amy in New York seemed always to hover on the brink of deportation by the immigration authorities. Perhaps for this reason, she decided to leave the United States in 1945, while she could still do so under her own steam.

Once again Amy arrived at a destination just in time to do something significant for the cause of Pan-Africanism. Having been in on the founding of the largest Pan-African movement in history, she now found herself playing an important ceremonial role at the beginning of the famous Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester, England in 1945. The Pan-African Congresses came out of a movement initiated by Trinidad lawyer Henry Sylvester Williams in 1900 and revived by Afro-American scholar W.E.B. DuBois in 1919. The 1945 meeting was planned by some of the veterans of Amy's 1930s restaurant, in particular George Padmore. Padmore and Kwame Nkrumah were the main organizers.

Nkrumah later became prime minister of independent Ghana in 1957. Padmore became his adviser on African affairs. Amy co-chaired the opening session of this epochal congress, together with W.E.B. DuBois.

Up to this point Amy was, like Garvey before her, a Pan-Africanist who had not succeeded in setting foot on the mother continent of Africa. She had by now worked for Africa for many years and had met and befriended many Africans. Several of them would become influential political figures in the era of African independence. Yet Africa continued to elude her.

Amy rectified this in 1946 when she sailed from England to Liberia. Liberia had had a long attraction for Pan-Africanists in general and Garveyites in particular. Begun as a refuge for Afro-American ex-slaves in 1820, it had attracted thousands of Afro-American and Caribbean immigrants over the years. Garvey in the 1920s had attempted unsuccessfully to remove his headquarters from Harlem to Liberia.

The more that Amy Ashwood tried to forge her independent career the more she seemed to become entrapped in Garvey's shadow. She herself was never loath to exploit her Garveyite connection and she used the name Mrs Garvey to full advantage. In Liberia, as elsewhere in West Africa, the name Garvey still guaranteed its holder adulation and attention and Amy basked in the glory reflected by her late husband. She was feted by politicians and ordinary people, and established a close, apparently amorous relationship with President William V.S. Tubman. She claimed to have considered marrying him and he, in turn, remained a devoted friend to the end of her life. The possibility of Garvey's first wife marrying the president of the country that had figured so prominently in his organizational schemes was fraught with ironies of all description.

Amy's trip to Liberia was in fact the base of a three-year sojourn in West Africa. In addition to Liberia, she spent varying periods in Senegal, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria and the Cameroons. By this time Amy's interests had turned strongly towards women's concerns. To this end she did extensive fieldwork into the status of women in West Africa. She met important women, joined a female secret society, travelled for days up-country to meet a powerful woman chief and collected voluminous notes on such subjects as the family, women's societies, polygamy and women's voluntary associations. She lectured extensively to women's groups everywhere. Poorer women particularly occupied her attention. She grieved at the material conditions of their existence, but defended the institution of polygamy in its West African context.

The outstanding event of this, Amy's first West African journey, was the tracing of her ancestral roots back to Ashanti in Ghana. Armed with the childhood reminiscences of her African-born great-grandmother, she was able to piece together the story of the old lady's family, the wars that resulted in her capture and her enslavement in Jamaica. Amy's family, it turned out, were rulers of a local area in Ashanti and she was able to meet with long-lost relatives. The Asantehene (king of Ashanti) himself investigated the evidence. He convened a formal hearing and listened to the testimony of Amy and local historians before officially welcoming Amy back as a long lost daughter of Ashanti. This was one of the most moving moments of Amy's life. Her quest for her African roots had persisted since hearing her



great-grandmother's story as a little girl. Over the years she had quizzed her West African friends in an effort to identify the place names mentioned by her great-grandmother. Now, at the successful culmination of four decades of effort she was overwhelmed at the result and sobbed uncontrollably as she listened to the Asantehehene's judgement.

After three years in West Africa Amy returned to England in 1949, just in time for the postwar influx of West Indians which was to change the racial face of Britain. She spent some time in the Handsworth district of Birmingham, an area destined to become a major focus of West Indian settlement. Here, and later in London, she became one of England's pioneer social workers among the new West Indian population. She visited schools trying to defuse racial problems and warned that England was headed towards a United States style racist society. In London's Ladbroke Grove she opened a community centre which served also as restaurant and small boarding house.

In 1953, she interrupted her English work with an extensive tour of the West Indies. Here her emphasis was on the women's movement. In Barbados, Aruba, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname and elsewhere she lectured to women's organizations and met with those engaged in child welfare work. In Barbados especially her stay was very productive. She was able to persuade several women's groups to come together into a Barbados Women's Alliance. Her hosts here were a group of young men who were already preparing the groundwork for what would soon become the Democratic Labour Party, led by Errol Barrow. One of her lectures in Barbados was delivered to a large crowd under the steel shed at Queen's Park, where Garvey himself had addressed thousands in 1937. Some of Amy's Barbadian hosts in 1953 had actually hosted Garvey in 1937.

For the next ten years Amy divided her time between England and West Africa. She never could settle anywhere for long, but wherever she went she seemed to act as a catalyst galvanizing those around her into action. She was an effective organizer, in the manner of the itinerant UNIA organizers of old. What she never regained, after the break with Garvey, was the stable organization into which she could feed her mobilizing initiatives. The organizations she founded tended to be short-lived. One such, established in London in 1958, bore the unlikely name of the Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. In name at least, this was almost identical with the association which had been a major adversary of the UNIA in the United States. Like its United States namesake, Amy's new organization was integrationist in outlook, signalling a longstanding drift away from Garvey's black nationalism.

Amy's community organizing skills were taxed to the limit in 1958 when the Notting Hill riots erupted in the very neighbourhood where her community centre was located. These were England's worst racial riots since 1919, when an earlier generation of white hooligans had attacked an outnumbered black population. Amy was active on committees attempting to contain the violence and trying to obtain bail for black men jailed in the aftermath of the fighting.

In 1957 and again in the early 1960s she spent time in Ghana, Liberia and Las Palmas. This time around she ran into financial difficulties as various business ventures failed. These included a concession to a diamond mine in Liberia, given her by President Tubman.

Tired and weary, Amy arrived back in London in 1964 just in time, yet again, to make history. The Jamaican government was attempting to have Marcus Garvey's body returned home to the land of his birth. An earlier attempt by Amy Jacques, Wife No. 2, had been thwarted by Amy Ashwood in the 1940s. On that occasion Ashwood had obtained a court order preventing Jacques from removing the body from England. She still contended, even at that late stage, that Amy Jacques was not the lawful wife of Marcus Garvey. Now, in 1964, Ashwood consented to the body's release and even signed the necessary papers as next of kin. The Jamaican government rewarded her with official recognition at ceremonies in London marking the event. She also received VIP treatment on her return home to Jamaica in December 1964.

From this point on, Amy's life would centre on the Caribbean. She lived in relatively straightened circumstances while trying various abortive schemes to earn a livelihood. In 1966 and 1967 she spent nine months in Trinidad under the care of a chiropractic friend. In 1967 she made her final visit to the United States. There, with Marcus Garvey riding high in the midst of the Black Power revolution, she was once again able to turn her surname into celebrity status.

Amy Ashwood returned to Jamaica for the last time in 1968. She died in relative poverty in 1969, after checking herself out of hospital, against her doctor's wishes. She confided in one of her last letters that she knew there was nothing her doctors could do, so she saw no point in remaining institutionalized.

Her funeral was attended by a small group of stalwart friends, among them Mrs Ivy Constable Richards, a neighbour who had befriended her in her last months and had provided comfort to the very end. President Tubman made frantic efforts to cable her money in her last days but Amy was not to receive it. The telegrams were in cipher and no one could be found to decode them.

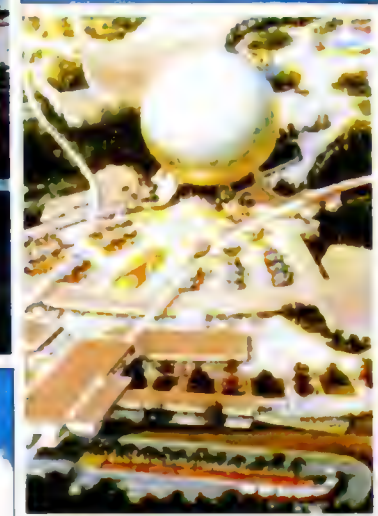
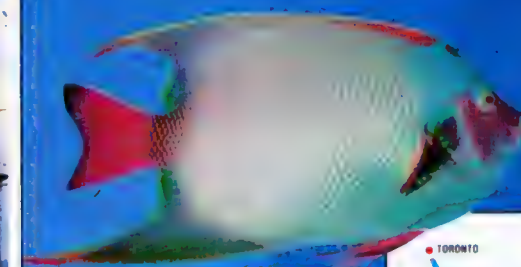
Amy died as she had lived, strongwilled, independent, peripatetic and making plans faster than she could realize them. There was something of the loner in her, though she was usually surrounded by acquaintances. Her itinerant life weaves like a thread connecting an amazing array of major personalities and events in the history of the African world of the twentieth century. From Marcus Garvey to Sam Manning the calypsonian, to C.L.R. James and George Padmore, to Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, to President Tubman and Prime Minister Errol Barrow, to Adam Clayton Powell and Paul Robeson, from the Barbados Women's Alliance to a female secret society in West Africa, from the Notting Hill riots to Black Power in Harlem, from the first meetings of the UNIA in Jamaica in 1914 to the Fifth Pan-African Congress of 1945, Amy's life was, in many ways, Pan-Africanism made manifest.

#### Note

This article is based on my forthcoming book, **Amy Ashwood Garvey : Pan-Africanist, Feminist and Wife No. 1** (Dover, Ma: The Majority Press, expected 1988). It is based overwhelmingly on primary sources, most of which are not generally yet available to researchers. These include private collections of Amy Ashwood Garvey's Papers held in London, New York and Kingston and restricted court records pertaining to her matrimonial suits against Marcus Garvey in New York.

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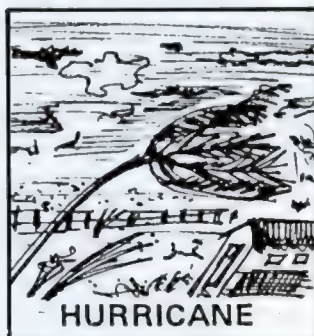


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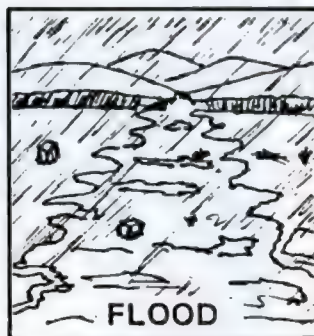
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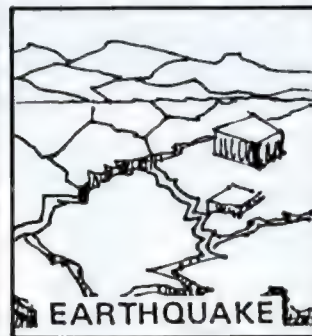
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# Amy Jacques Garvey

By Rupert Lewis and Maureen Warner-Lewis



National Library of Jamaica



Garvey's 100th anniversary coincides with the 90th birthday of his second wife, Amy Jacques Garvey. It is indeed fitting to pay tribute to her for he relied heavily on her politically, organizationally and emotionally. She brought up their two children virtually by herself and for thirty-three years after his death was the principal source of information about the Garvey Movement. She deserves a substantial study in her own right for she was a leader of the Garvey Movement and she put her administrative, speaking and literary talents at the disposal of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League.

Amy Jacques was born on 31 December 1896 in Kingston, the first of the seven children born to George Samuel Jacques and his wife, Charlotte. She began school at St. Patrick's on Windward Road, Kingston. She left there for Deaconess High School (now St. Hugh's High School) and Wolmer's Girls' School. She was from childhood reserved, disciplined, and given to the intellectual and 'edifying'. She spent less time at play or conviviality than at reading about serious subjects and expertly rendering the classics on the piano. Her musical skills were nurtured by Mrs Dad, her private tutor.

Her father had planned to have her articled to his solicitor, Mr T.R. Macmillan of Kingston, after she left school. But his death stymied this plan and instead, Mr Macmillan invited her to work as a legal secretary in his chambers. When later she was weakened by recurrent bouts of malaria, she was medically advised to live for a while in a cooler climate. She thought of going to England but the war prevented this. In-

stead, she left for New York in 1918 to stay with a paternal cousin. It was there that she became enthused by the UNIA and developed a racial pride that nothing in her upbringing had taught her. Learning of the organization's need for experienced clerks, she introduced herself to Garvey following one of his addresses at the New York Liberty Hall one Sunday night. He invited her to work for the UNIA and she soon became secretary of the Negro Factories Corporation and office manager.

When Garvey's marriage to Amy Ashwood collapsed early in 1920, Amy Jacques replaced Amy Ashwood as Garvey's private secretary. She retained this post until her own marriage to him in July 1922. By this time he was on trial and facing a prison sentence. But loyalty was one of the hallmarks of her conduct and in the precepts and work of Garveyism she had discovered her mission in life. Garvey recognised this abiding loyalty and reciprocated with love and confidence. He discussed his ideas with her over his favourite snack — home-made ice cream. Sometimes they spoke until the wee hours of the morning while she took shorthand notes and contended his views. His voice, fiery on the public platform, rose scarcely above a whisper at home.

A large top-floor apartment on 129th Street, Harlem, was home for the Garvey couple, Marcus's sister Indiana Peart and her husband, and Amy's sister Ida, who worked as secretary to Mr Hamilton, a Jamaican, who managed the laundry belonging to the Negro Factories Corporation. Amy's life during the UNIA's heyday was hectic with organ-



izational activities, meetings, court cases, and lengthy train tours. Furthermore, when Garvey was imprisoned in 1925 she would travel from New York by overnight train, once a month, alone and armed with a gun, to visit him in Atlanta. This heady and tension-wracked life meant that she was unable to conceive, and it was only after the Garveys' enforced return to the relative tranquility of Kingston that she gave birth to two sons. Even with Garvey's deportation in 1927, the burden of selling off and packing up fell to her and she arrived back in Jamaica some months after his landing here.

It was the political and cultural upsurge that bred the 'New Negro' which had provided a congenial climate for the relationship between Amy Jacques and Marcus Garvey to flourish. It was to lead to a lifetime union that was extraordinarily political. Yet the partnership would not in all likelihood have materialised in Kingston. Whereas Garvey's background was rural and peasant/artisan, Amy Jacques was from a fairly well-off urban family. Her father's forebears seem to have come from Haiti to Kingston, and her great-grandfather had become Kingston's first mayor. George Jacques himself was therefore of that class and generation of men who took Sunday dinner in a coat. His starched round collars and a cigar were hallmarks of his appearance. A staunch member of the Duke Street Scots Kirk, he worked for years as manager of the La Paloma Cigar Factory on upper King Street owned by a Mr Burke. Jacques was also a modest property owner. Early in his marriage he bought seven acres on Long Mountain Avenue (now Mountain View Avenue) where he established the family home. He also acquired five properties in Kingston, the rents from which were to provide his family with an income after he died.

Amy recalled that, as a young girl, she had been ashamed of her father coming to her school because of his black colour. However, she attributed her political awareness to his influence. In earlier years he had lived and worked in Cuba and Baltimore and so he followed the development of local and overseas politics with avid interest. He would hold long discussions with her over current affairs including World War I dispatches in the journals he brought home. He had wanted his first child to be male and he therefore socialized Amy into the surrogate role and interests of a first son.

Amy's mother, on the other hand, was soft-natured and housewifely. She was the fair-skinned daughter of an English farmer from St. Elizabeth, Frank South, and his black wife, Jane. Amy's plunge into public life in the United States and her espousal of an unconventional cause surprised her retiring mother, her brothers and sister. However, 'Miss Amy' retained the respect, love and devotion of her family. She had assumed management of the Long Mountain household following the death of her father and even after marriage she continued to organize for the schooling and professional training of her brothers and sister.

This loyalty was to be repaid in later years when Amy settled permanently in Jamaica. The Garveys' finances were at an ebb. On account of rheumatic fever which was crippling the kneebones of her eldest child, Amy followed medical advice and returned Marcus Jnr. to the warm climate of Jamaica from England where they had been living. The cost of this was physical separation from Marcus Snr. who saw no prospect in re-establishing a life in Jamaica.

Amy's reintegration into Jamaican life was a domestic not a political matter. Her family rallied to her support. In



Mrs Garvey and her sons Julius (left) and Marcus Jnr. at the reinterment of Marcus Garvey at George VI Park (now National Heroes Park) August 1964.

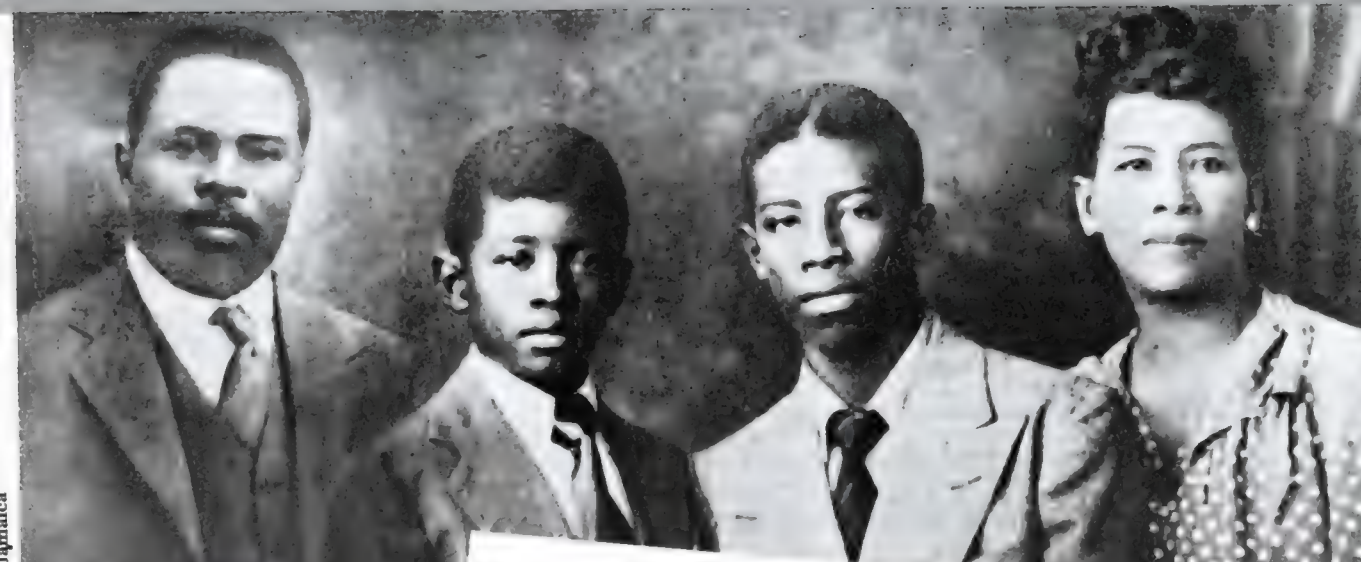
time, the larger portion of the family land was sold off and houses were built on adjoining lots for each of George Jacques's surviving children. Amy's property at 51c Mountain View Avenue together with the guidance of her brother, Cleveland, in real estate matters provided the base from which she would begin a financial recovery. Through judicious management, she was able to repeat her father's achievement of clearing her properties of financial encumbrance by the time of her death on 25 July 1973.

On her return to Jamaica in 1938 she lived modestly and quietly. For reasons of the unusual path her life had taken, she now had little in common with her former schoolmates and had virtually no social life. One of her overriding concerns now was the care and education of her two children. Under the monthly supervision of Dr McFarlane at the Kingston Public Hospital, Marcus Jnr. was eventually able to discard his leg plaster and crutches. After a stint at St. John's College on Laws Street run by Mr Clarke, he won a scholarship to Calabar High School. Julius subsequently won a half-scholarship to Wolmer's Boys'. Blessings. For these were financially stringent years for Amy Jacques Garvey. But she knew how to make do on little.

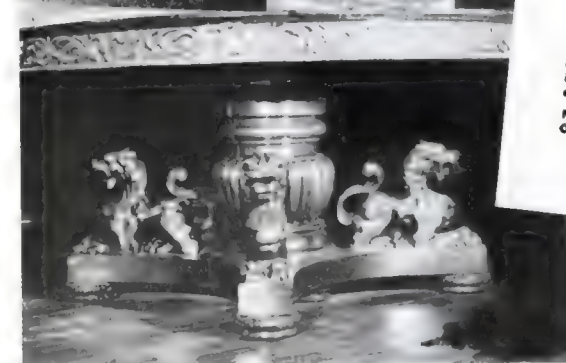
Never given to housekeeping pursuits, she relegated the heavier domestic duties to a faithful once-weekly help. This support was supplemented by the visits of her sister Ida who would bring her tasty cooked meat dishes. Amy meanwhile was wedded to her typewriter, formulating articles in defence of Garveyism. For her other overriding concern was the rehabilitation of Marcus Garvey's name.

The most widely known collection of writings by Marcus Garvey are the *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, Volumes I and II, compiled by Amy Jacques. Volume I was published in 1923 when Amy Jacques Garvey was just twenty-six years old. In the preface she states that her reason for compiling it was not originally for publication 'but rather as a personal record of the opinions and sayings of my husband during his career as the leader of that portion of the human family known as the Negro race'. Volume II, the more substantial collection, was done while Garvey was in prison in Atlanta and formed part of the campaign for his release. His appeal to the Supreme Court had failed and he

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THE GARVEY FAMILY: A composite picture (top). Mrs Garvey and her sons Marcus Jnr and Julius were photographed in New York City in 1946. Centre, left and right: Amy Jacques Garvey as a young woman; below, right: the gateway with the word 'Somali' still visible on the gatepost - all that remains of 'Somali Court' the Garveys' former home in Kingston. The present house replaced the one they lived in. Garvey's desk (now the property of the Jamaica National Heritage Trust) is shown above. The letter (centre) from Garvey to his second wife and her comments below it reflect the trust and mutual respect between them (reproduced from the book *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* which she edited).

Herbie Gordon





was trying for executive clemency. Garvey's letter to her written in May 1925 is worth quoting at length:

To you have I entrusted the accompanying manuscripts and other documents, articles and speeches, requesting that you publish same in book form for the information of the Negro race and those concerned, so that the public may be able to judge, impartially, the issues involved.

I request you to do this because of my implicit confidence in you, and my firm belief that you will not alter, change or distort anything that I have said contained therein.

With this belief in you, I commit my thoughts, opinions and the facts and circumstances surrounding my trial and persecution to your hands, feeling that you will, on these instructions publish them letter for letter and word for word . . . [Jacques Garvey, Vol. 11 frontispiece].

Five months later, by October 1925, Amy Jacques had edited, proof-read and published over 400 pages of Garvey's writings. This was a truly marathon effort. She was later to recall:

I thought I had done almost the impossible, when I was able to rush a first copy of Vol. II to him, but he callously said, 'Now I want you to send free copies to Senators, Congressmen and prominent men who might become interested in my case, as I want to make another application for a pardon.' When I completed this task I weighed 98 lbs., had low blood pressure and one eye was badly strained.

In addition she was fulfilling speaking engagements, writing for the *Negro World* and overseeing administrative matters. Garvey's tributes to her in poetry and prose point to the esteem in which he held her.

In 1927 she published Garvey's long poem "The Tragedy of White Injustice" and "Selections from the Poetic Meditations of Marcus Garvey".

When Rupert got to know her in 1967 she was already seventy. But it did not appear so because of her mental and physical strength, her capacity for work, her methodical approach in answering dozens of letters every week, in preparing articles, public talks and in caring for her sons and grandchildren. Her interviews to journalists, scholars, students and other visitors who made the pilgrimage to 12 Mona Road made her relive extremely difficult years when her life was in danger and she had had to carry a gun in the American South; the vendettas against Garvey mounted by other blacks and the slander and misunderstandings he suffered. When she spoke she gave of herself. It was as if this would be the last time she would speak. She would pause only to sip cherry juice. She never charged for these interviews because she had a moral mission.

Sometimes she would take her visitors to Burnt Ground (the bus terminus before Cross Roads) where Garvey used to hold forth, Edelweis Park on Slipe Pen Road, Coke Church, Ward Theatre, Liberty Hall at 76 King Street, the old Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation building, and the Somali Court residence on Lady Musgrave Road. When she was finished she would be exhausted physically and emotionally. She usually did this type of work in the afternoons. She would then have her evening meal, relax on the porch and recover before putting back the bundles of letters, documents and old scrap-books she had taken out during the interview.

Rupert lived as a nominal tenant at her home from 1971 until her death in 1973, but more in the capacity of a kind of research assistant, digging up materials at the Institute of Jam-

aica and answering writers to the *Gleaner* who maligned Garvey. At the same time he was engaged in writing a post-graduate thesis emphasising the Jamaican aspects of Garvey's work. Their relationship was however far from thesis-oriented. It was very political and personal. Since 1967 he had discovered in her an extraordinary personality and to have had the opportunity to be so close to her was to see and understand a history that is yet largely untold, to daily witness the actions of a woman who was firmly rooted, and who could not be fooled or bribed. She was absolutely incorruptible and strong. She was then in her seventies. Garvey had the honour of marrying her in her twenties. The confidence Garvey had invested in her from her twenties had been over-fulfilled. For if the historical record is now being set right, credit for this is due in large measure to her own perseverance. There is no significant researcher or writer on Garveyism who is not indebted to her.

It was in the 1960s and 70s, with the development of the Black Power and civil rights movements in the United States and the growth of the liberation movements in Africa, that publishers and scholars once again expressed interest in Garvey's writings. Number 12 Mona Road became a publishing house and a research and documentation centre.

In 1963 she self-published her well-known book, *Garvey and Garveyism*, which she rewrote five times. The completion of the book was no doubt inspired by her visit to Nigeria in November 1960 as guest of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe who was being installed as the country's first governor-general. Later on she went to visit Dr Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana. The regard in which Garvey was held was encouraging and the decolonisation of Africa was the realisation of a vision which many had felt to be unrealistic. To store copies of her book, she added a back room on to her home. And once a week she would go down to the general post office on King Street and mail copies to libraries, bookstores and individuals abroad. She gave away so many of the first edition that she probably never made a profit. She usually wrapped these packages on a Thursday afternoon and took them by bus to be mailed along with the letters she had written during the week. She sometimes had unpleasant encounters on the public transport. But she did not drive, did not own a car and could not afford to pay a chauffeur. *Garvey and Garveyism* was later re-published by Collier-Macmillan in the United States in 1970.

In 1968 she published a collection of articles entitled *Black Power in America*. The articles were: "The Source and Course of Black Power in America" which looked at Garvey as a forerunner of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. The second was "Marcus Garvey's Impact on Jamaica" and the third, a documentary piece, "The Impact of Marcus Garvey on Africa as told by Africans". Finally there was "The Power of the Human Spirit" which is a philosophical reflection and a testimony to her faith. This pamphlet was later incorporated into the American edition of *Garvey and Garveyism*.

She undertook a third volume of *Philosophy and Opinions*. This included materials on Jamaica and the Caribbean that had been published in the *Blackman* newspaper, the *Black Man* magazine and the *New Jamaican* — material that Rupert had used in his research. Of this source material, only a small portion of Garvey's extensive writings and speeches about Jamaica and the Caribbean was eventually included. This

volume was published posthumously in 1977 with the Nigerian scholar, Professor Essien-Udom as co-editor. But he points out in his preface to *More Philosophy and Opinions*: 'the volume is the work of Mrs Garvey'.

Apart from her own writing and editing, she helped shape a number of other books on Garvey. Of note is John Henrik Clarke's collection, *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* which came out the year following her death.

As for her journalism, that covered fifty years. In 1923 she became a regular contributor to the weekly *Negro World* and later started to edit a page entitled "Our Women and What They Think". This she did for three years. On this page she wrote political commentary, in particular interpreting international events from the standpoint of black people. A few of her articles from the 1920s were reprinted in the book, *Voices of a Black Nation: Political Journalism in the Harlem Renaissance* edited by Theodore Vincent. The page also offered personal advice to women; there was a column on Black Cross Nurses and reports on the activities of women. She also contributed to many of Garvey's publications and after his death wrote for many magazines and newspapers in the Caribbean, the United States and Africa. In the late 1960s and early 1970s a number of her articles appeared in radical publications such as *Abeng* and *Bongo-man*. In addition, she purchased dozens of these publications for mailing abroad.

Amy Jacques Garvey wrote thousands of letters and she may very well be remembered for this in addition to her editorial work. Her papers at Fisk University in the United States represent an invaluable source of material about herself and the Garvey Movement. She did not often speak about herself, about her private life. Generally speaking, she submerged herself in the public image but occasionally in correspondence she would say something revealing about Garvey as a man and about herself as a woman.

Her letter written on 28 March 1955 to E. David Cronon on receipt of his *Black Moses* shows this greater concern with public and scholarly issues rather than with subjective matter. Yet private trauma erupts in the first paragraph:

When it arrived ten days ago, and I started to read same, the abuse and jeers of his contemporaries brought back so vividly to my mind the horrors of the past years that I seem to live them over again — I talked to myself in imaginary defence of M.G. . . . I was fitfully awakened many nights, when a suspended scene reached its climax in my dreams . . . From December I have been under-going financial difficulty, and to read again the concerted efforts to destroy Garvey, while I suffer the stark reality of his years of giving all, and getting nothing, is like probing the old wounds, and putting a caustic on them, which I cannot throw back in the faces of the givers . . .

The eleven-page typescript goes on to give a sharp critique of the book to which she had contributed a great deal of material. As a stickler for accuracy, she obviously felt the author should have assessed the nature and bias of the sources he had consulted. But Cronon was writing in the still strongly racist ambience of the United States in the 1950s, and his image of Garvey as an escapist Black Moses was to dominate scholarship well into the 1970s.

There were other correspondents like C.L.R. James, George Padmore, Kwame Nkrumah, W.E.B. DuBois and W.A. Domingo. Two excerpts from letters indicate the political content of these exchanges. On 20 April 1954 Domingo wrote:

Quite a formidable list of publications have (sic.) been banned from entry into Jamaica. I approve of excluding the books on magic and other superstitions, but in banning books on politics . . . the government simply reveals its fears. Colonial peoples have a double problem. They have to fight their own reactionaries as well as the naturally reactionary government of the controlling power. The situation is worse when the two elements fuse and work against the masses, one openly as the agent of an alien over-lord and the other concealed as the friends of the people of whom they are a part.

By 5 September 1956 Domingo again wrote:

Jamaica has no particular attraction for me any more. I dream of a free country, but that dream is now a nightmare.

George Padmore in a letter dated 3 October 1950 cautioned:

It is typical of West Indian mentality to make a big show of erecting public statues to men, who in their lifetime were ignored. It seems that the money would be better spent in endowing a scholarship or building a school for the benefit of future generations. Such an institution could bear the name M.G.

These are letters from men who had been Garvey's opponents in the United States in the 1920s, criticizing him from socialist and Marxist perspectives, but who later came to re-evaluate Garvey's contribution.

Then there are the letters to and from W.E.B. DuBois which deal with their joint Pan-African efforts. Her solidarity with the working-class movement was acknowledged in 1945 after a general strike led by the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria. Nearer home, Norman Manley's letters in November 1944 ask her to campaign for him and set out the speaking itinerary in his rural St. Andrew constituency. There are also her letters with Bustamante, and with subsequent Jamaican prime ministers. She criticised Prime Minister Hugh Shearer on his government's failure to consult her on the posthumous award given to Martin Luther King in her husband's name, for its ban on Walter Rodney and the prohibition of works by Stokely Carmichael, Malcolm X and others. In like manner was her final publication. This took the form of a letter to then Prime Minister Michael Manley entitled "Why Mrs. Garvey Refused the \$6800 Pension". The Cabinet had taken a decision to grant a tax-free pension to the widows of national heroes. In her letter she stated:

I have lived with deprivation through the years, the ridicule from the misinformed, the sneers of those whose horizons stop with the shores of the country of their domicile, and above all the harassments of governmental administrators, whose lust for political power and personal aggrandisement see in me an implacable enemy, because I am against their manipulation of the economic interests of the black masses by an alien economic elite.

Amy Jacques Garvey was a vigorous upholder of a self-respecting nationalism. But this tradition had been shrouded in lies, ridicule and silence, or had been attacked at all levels of the educational system. As such, she was made to feel marginalised. Those who knew her, however, recognized that she was one of the finest embodiments of the black radical tradition in the twentieth century.

## Note

Biographical details in this article derive from (a) an interview with Mrs Garvey's sister, Mrs Ida Jacques Repole, conducted by Rupert Lewis and Maureen Warner-Lewis, 7 March 1987, (b) reminiscences of Rupert Lewis, (c) information provided in Mrs Garvey's *Garvey and Garveyism*.



## Garvey and the Jamaican Art Movement

Three disparate perspectives

By Gloria Escoffery

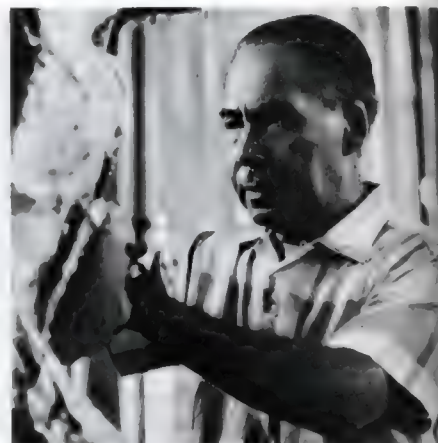
There are few artists alive in Jamaica today who are old enough to have known Marcus Garvey in person, or to have been aware of the sensation created by his return to Jamaica in 1927 after imprisonment and deportation from the United States. I was only six years old at the time when Garvey was campaigning for election to the Legislative Council but I do have a vivid memory which imprinted the name of Garvey on my imagination. As a little girl up from the country and staying overnight with family friends who lived on Brentford Road, in the Cross Roads area, I heard the boom of the oratorical voice and the rounds of applause that drifted across the gully from Edelweis Park, evoking an explanation from my mother of what was going on. What my childish antennae picked up at close range was the tone of the adult reaction to Garvey, an ambivalence which encompassed mockery, respect and a hint of foreboding. Was this phenomenon of the black man 'from nowhere' who was challenging the accepted social order 'for real' or simply a nine-day-wonder which would be quickly erased from the memory of the impressionable masses? As history has recorded, Garvey lost the election and left his homeland to live and die obscurely in England. However, his defeat in this particular battle did not mean, as we all know, the end of the war.

At that time sculptor Alvin Marriott was already a young man of twenty-seven, about to undertake the first in a series of essays in Garvey portraiture which would reach its climax in the full-length statue of the National Hero installed in St. Ann's Bay, his birthplace. The idea occurred to me that in this year of the centenary of Garvey's birth, it would be appropriate to obtain first hand impressions of Garvey from Mr Marriott. By way of contrast it would be interesting to find out from a couple of younger artists what Garvey and Gar-

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Statue by Alvin Marriott (above) of the Rt. Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey, National Hero, which stands in his native parish of St Ann in front of the parish library.



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veyism meant to them. Two prime candidates for interviewing conveniently presented themselves, brought to notice because they were currently exhibiting works of interest which bore dramatic witness to the living presence in our midst of 'black consciousness'. David

Boxer and Robert Cookhorne, showing along with Eric Cadien at the Mutual Life Gallery — all three artists in fact — projected an image of self-confidence, maturity and virtuosity that clinched their reputations as leading artistic visionaries of the 1980s.<sup>1</sup>

In the works of Boxer and Cookhorne the vision takes completely different forms, Boxer being a surrealist whose collages, paintings and assemblages read like personal footnotes to history, while Cookhorne is a satirical expressionist who presents in single focus, commanding images which hit the viewer between the eyes. This is primarily a matter of temperament, but there are other factors involved in the moulding of their individual views of the world. The narrow margin of fourteen years difference in age<sup>2</sup> worked subtle changes in the environment of thought and expectation in which Cookhorne grew up. Moreover their disparate social origins provided quite different bases from which to commence that vital journey into self-awareness.

David Boxer, born just on the outer edge of the time frame which would place him among a rising generation of under-forties, is, besides being an artist, a trained art historian (and of course director/curator of the National Gallery and in that capacity a dedicated promoter and preserver of African 'retentions' in Jamaican intuitive art). History, as he interprets it, is a re-living of the effects of colonization in the Caribbean, including the ravages wreaked on the black man in slavery, and further back in time the effective genocide of the Arawaks. But there is also a strong undertow of what may almost be termed nostalgia — though somewhat more forward-looking — for the positives of Western or 'white' civilization; this is symbolised by Beethoven and Ingres in some of his works. This element distances him from the Garvey ideal of separate races and separate cultures, but he pays tribute to Garvey for his great originality and cultural awareness.<sup>3</sup> Garvey's ideas were appropriate, he thinks, within the context of awakening black people — not in Africa where they already had a sense of self-worth rooted in their culture, but in the New World — to a pride in their destiny. However, it was not discovery of Garveyism that brought Boxer to full awareness of his own links with the African heritage but exposure to life in the United States in the protest era of the 1960s — where of course seeds sown many decades before by Garvey were just bearing fruit.<sup>4</sup> To break through the assumptions of his middle-class Jamaican background, in which he was categorised as 'white', was a process subjecting the sensitivity of the artist to what amounted to shock treatment, an

David Boxer, *Tears of Sheba*, (detail). Box Assemblage. Collection: Mr Ronnie Nasralla.



Herbie Gordon

experience for which he says he is grateful.

Robert Cookhorne, known to his friends as African, a name which in true Jamaican tradition he uses alternatively but not exclusively in signing his pictures, comes from a background which underwrites his identification with grass roots Jamaican culture. As an artist he is the product of the Jamaica School of Art where the sculptures of the foremost 'forerunner' of our art movement including *Negro Aroused*<sup>5</sup> must have been a strong influence in his formative years. He has travelled somewhat since graduation and recently mounted a successful exhibition in Switzerland, but so far his travel has mainly been of an intellectual order, through reading and taking an intelligent interest in media coverage of world events. Ironically perhaps, he came by his nickname, African, quite by chance;

it was not as in the case of Kofi Kayiga, a middle-class gesture of defiance and symbol of rebirth to African heritage.<sup>6</sup> A friend looked at one of his early drawings and exclaimed that it looked like 'African ghost'. The name stuck, and African likes it. For some reason he says he does not fully understand, he feels uneasy when he signs his works with his 'official' name.<sup>7</sup>

Cookhorne grew up at a time when Garvey was a legendary figure. While Garvey's ideas on the potential of the black man in terms of world class achievement may be said to have infiltrated the Jamaican psyche, there were still social discrepancies stemming from slavery days. On the world scene, apartheid was the running sore, but Cookhorne became aware that there were a host of instances of exploitation, not all of them related to racism, and by no means were they confined to Third



World countries. This accounts for the way he took exception to having his show in Switzerland labelled by one critic 'Third World Reality'. Blackness was an issue, obviously, but there were other issues such as the threat of nuclear war which stared out at the viewer from the horrors on canvas.<sup>8</sup>

My separate interviews with these three very different personalities were long, unstructured, and need I add, fascinating. I found that in writing this article it was necessary to edit drastically, sometimes to summarise, and especially when recording verbatim what was said to cut my own comments and interjections to the bone. Boxer was so articulate in discussing his works I could hardly bear to miss out a word of his explanations. Cookhorne was more interested in discussing social issues. I scarcely succeeded in drawing him out on the content of his works. With him I had a hammer and tongs discussion which covered a wide range of topics and current events. Unfortunately this had to be somewhat abridged.

We had decided beforehand to focus on certain works as specially relevant to the project, but found that it was hardly possible to keep within these bounds. Each artist's total vision is, of course, stamped on every one of his works. In Boxer's case we paused for a long time before one assemblage which, because of its loose, rather sprawling form, is difficult to photograph in a way which would illuminate some of the points discussed. This is the *Violin for Ingres*, in which the relationship between Africa and the Arawaks with Europe turned out to be the key theme.



Now aged eighty-five and in failing health, Alvin Marriott is a bit forgetful or indecisive about names and dates. Not so when he is recalling the strong emotional impact of Garvey on him as a young man. He becomes almost too excited to speak when he recalls the intensity of the struggle not only to do justice to his first and dominant concept of the great man but also to make sure that the monument to Garvey would find its well deserved place in the minds and hearts of his countrymen. His memories go back to days before he saw or spoke with Garvey in person, when, as a youth, he heard his elders discussing ideas mooted by this unique Jamaican bold enough to take on the world as he cham-

Robert (African)  
Cookhorne, Man  
Against  
Backyardism.  
Mixed  
media on  
paper.  
Collection:  
Mr and Mrs  
Edward  
Kadunc.



Herbie Gordon

pioned the cause of Negroes everywhere. Consequently he made sure to be among the crowd on the docks to greet Garvey on his return home after he was deported from the United States. He subsequently attended some of Garvey's meetings, including one attended by many foreign delegates of the UNIA.

But politics was not young Marriott's prime interest. What he was after was imprinting on his mind a picture of Garvey in action. To achieve the objective of getting the great man to sit for a portrait he obtained the privilege of an interview with him at his King Street campaign headquarters. Garvey was too busy to sit, but seeing the sincerity of his young admirer, and realising that the portrait would rebound to his credit, he consented to have his likeness made. Using a good photograph of Garvey, in profile, Marriott proceeded on his own to fashion the head but the work did not satisfy him. It took many years of

practice, and study of the sculptures in the May Pen Cemetery, Spanish Town Cathedral and Kingston Parish Church before he was ready to try again. He ultimately was able to undergo professional training in London, thanks to a British Council scholarship. This was in the late forties, so Marriott was already a mature artist. At last he could realise his ambition to execute an adequate portrait of Garvey. On a later occasion in the seventies a full-length statue of Garvey executed in London, gave him some moments of real anxiety. First there was the struggle to get the sculpture completed. After months of preparatory work he suddenly found that he had to move out of the studio where he was working. Then, having put in nine months of labour, he entered the room one morning to find that, because the clay was too heavy for the armature, the sculpture had collapsed and was lying in pieces on the floor. Still he persevered. He solved the technical prob-

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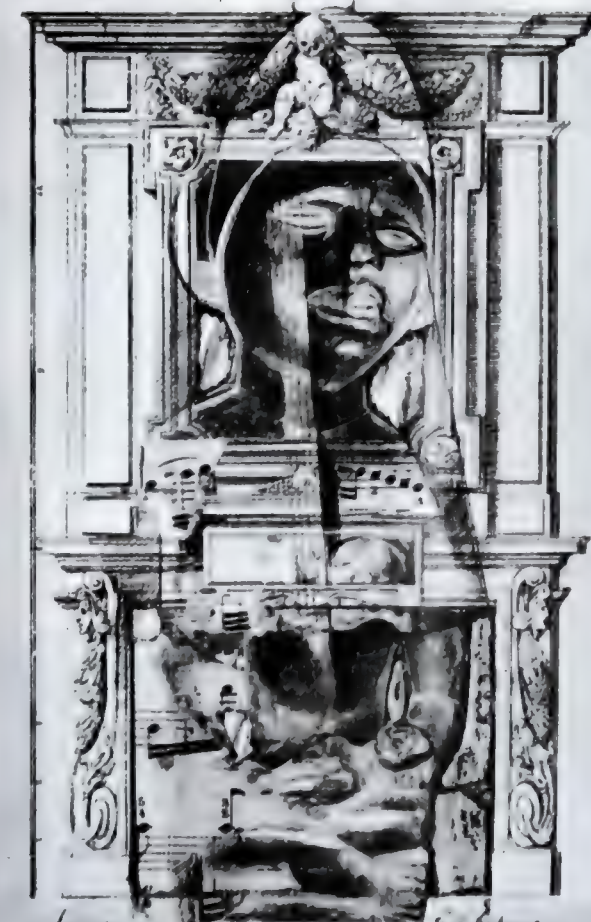
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lem and brought the work to fruition, even surprising himself by the achievement. After that, many important visitors from Jamaica and elsewhere flocked to his studio to view the portrait and were astonished because it was so lifelike. On an earlier occasion in the late forties in London Marriott had received a letter from the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation expressing the wish to acquire a Garvey head as a public monument. Mayor Ken Hill opened a fund with a personal contribution of £10. Marriott had undertaken the work originally as a labour of love. Indeed, financial gain has never been foremost in his mind, as one may well imagine, considering his circumstances today. Still, he returned to Jamaica with the expectation that he would be adequately paid for his labour. Alas, on his return he found that the fund had not grown as healthily as might have been expected, barely reaching about £200.

Indignant at the lack of public awareness, Marriott prepared to take the work directly to the people, by showing it on the streets; he actually wrote a letter to the police requesting permission to do this. The work was shown privately instead, to a group of eminent art lovers headed by Mr, later Sir, Philip Sherlock at the Institute of Jamaica. Ultimately it was 'Busta' (Sir Alexander Bustamante), who saved the day. He got up in parliament and made a speech which committed the nation to a fee of £700 for the Garvey portrait. This was a much smaller version than the full-length figure of the Garvey monument later placed in St. Ann's Bay.

Marriott has sculpted the likeness of many a national hero, but the ins and outs of politics have never interested him. As a committed Jehovah's Witness, he contemplates life in the light of a more comprehensive divine plan already formulated to establish a kingdom incorporating total order and justice. Himself a man of fair complexion who in Jamaica if not in the U.S.A., could 'pass for white', Marriott says that he has never personally experienced colour discrimination, either in England or in Jamaica. However, there were some powerful persons in Jamaica who put obstacles in his way, regarding him with suspicion as a radical. Perhaps he did, indeed, help to subvert the existing social order. His mission in life was to create inspiring images which would become a part of national consciousness

David Boxer,  
from the  
African  
Cycle,  
No. 8.  
Mixed media  
collage.  
Collection:  
Mr Patrick  
Bailey.



Herbie Gordon

and aspirations.

The average viewer may characterise Marriott's work as very definitely realistic, or naturalistic. He regards himself as something of a symbolist, in that in each portrait, or monument, he sought to project an essence beyond appearances. Sometimes, as in creating the stadium athlete, he worked from several models to create a synthesis. In making portraits he looked for the dominant characteristics or key to personality. He says he studied hundreds of photographs of Garvey but never found in one of them that essential dynamism of the born orator, which he sought to capture. This is difficult to realise in the case of a head, or bust, but he believes that he achieved it in the monumental full length Garvey in St. Ann's Bay. That is why, of all his works, it is closest to his heart.

Let us move now to the elder of the two artists who represent today's generation. David Boxer's imagination inhabits a world of complex ideas in which, I think, a man whose childhood was spent in the early twentieth century, as Marriott's was, would be totally at sea. The basic assumptions about society, about what art is all about, have changed completely. And yet . . . the thread of Garvey's influence runs through both lives.

We were on our way to look at the two collage series by Boxer obviously dealing with Africa, when somehow we were both drawn to the assemblage, *Violin for Ingres*; in fact it was impossible to ignore it as it drew attention away from the neighbouring works set back on the wall.

At floor level there was a violin case with some objects in it. From this a ladder led to further objects of interest on the wall. A difficult ascent was suggested by some spiny looking black





things on the rungs of the ladder; this appeared to be a parable of ascent in creativeness, which became somewhat easier at the approach to fulfilment — admittedly a clumsy summary of first impressions and a simplistic account of an assemblage in the usual Boxer style with its accumulation of details.

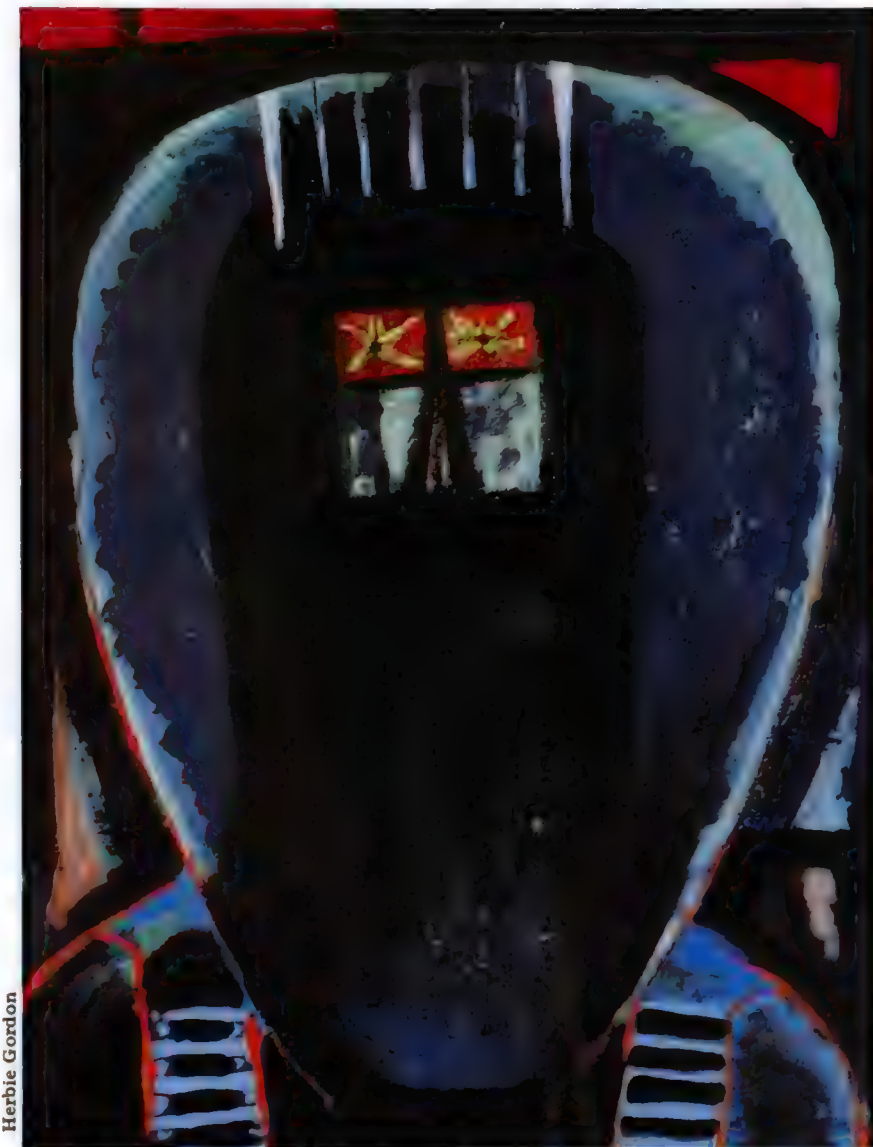
**G.E.** Surely this piece isn't African-inspired, is it?

**D.B.** Well, actually this doesn't deal primarily with Africa. It is dealing with Jamaica, and with the Arawaks. If you climb up the steps, you see the words on the second one are simply, 'There were one million Arawaks in Jamaica before Europe came' repeated continuously.

**G.E.** But there seems to be a feeling of ambivalence towards Europe, for surely Ingres is one of your idols.

**D.B.** Oh yes. I just feel a certain sad-

ness because that cultural epitome, that height of cultural achievement, the violin and the line of Ingres, which is one of the high points of draftmanship in Western art, had to be achieved through the destruction of other civilizations such as the Arawaks. Of one million Arawaks not one person remained that we can say is Arawak . . . only the shards. And they have been put in a coffin-like container which happens to be a violin case; but the violin case is like a coffin. The front part of the coffin has a little section with some European elements such as the parts of a musket which was discovered at the same site. There are all sorts of hidden meanings which aren't necessary for the overall meaning. This is the nature of all surrealist art and I consider myself a true surrealist. I don't set out to do a work that people understand. I simply set out to release images from inside myself. The understanding

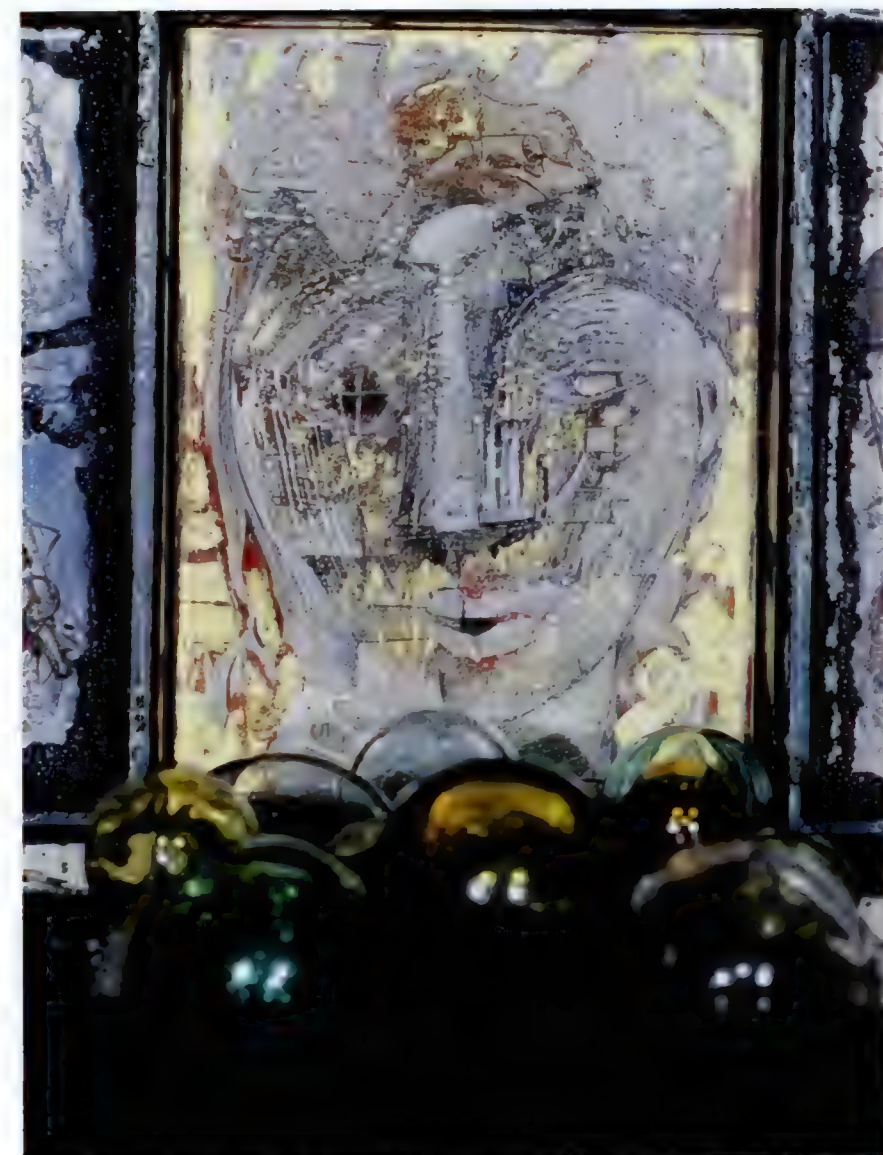


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Robert (African) Cookhorne, *New God*. Mixed media on paper. Collection: Mr. Trevor Clarke.



Robert (African) Cookhorne, *Head in #0*. Mixed media on paper. Collection: Mrs. T. Hewitt.



David Boxer, *Tears of Sheba*, (detail). Box Assemblage. Collection: Mr. Ronnie Nasralla

Herbie Gordon



of the work is something I leave to the viewer . . .

**G.E. Who may well have his own private associations. Did you intend the sea eggs?**

D.B. You read them as sea eggs? No, but *after* I had done them I remembered sea eggs sticking me on my foot and I wondered if that was where the association came from. I had intentionally thought of Christ's crown of thorns, and there you have the two elements, the notes of music juxtaposed with the thorns. So there within this little area you see those two extremes, the beauty of the music and the pain of the thorns brought together in an ambiguous statement as you move up [the ladder]. I think that once the artistic spirit is released and you know where you are going it becomes easier. [The 'spines' are more spaced out allowing easier passage for the foot as the imagined climber ascends]. The Arawaks were a simple people but they did leave some beautiful pieces of art — those wooden sculptures in the British Museum . . .

**G.E. And the African experience?**

D.B. This is represented by the violin bow, because somehow or other I see that bow as significant for those of us who are still here and can hope to play that violin. The bow is European and the chiwara<sup>9</sup> you see there in miniature is African; which is for me the only way I can exist, drawing elements from these two sources of myself. The chiwara has become for me a symbol of my African roots. You may remember the work down at the Gallery now, where there is a nineteenth century painting of a Christ with the chiwara.

Next we turned our attention to the *African Cycle*, consisting of six related collage compositions selected from a 'suite' of twelve. In each of these a piece of African sculpture is shown in relationship to an elegant European architectural frame; another recurring motif is the playful musical notes. The design is strictly controlled and stylishly austere; this effect is achieved partly by the severity of black and gold, relieved by subtle pastel tints.

D.B. All of these settings are European, baroque, and they happen to be fireplaces. Somewhere, subconsciously, there is a feeling that when Africa came here its culture was intentionally destroyed. The sculptures were thrown into

the fireplaces, and there is a resentment about that. One of the things that as an art historian has always upset me is that so little, in fact nothing, remains of that whole period, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, right up until 1922,<sup>10</sup> that we can say this is something created by the black Jamaican. And yet we know that carvers must have come over, carvings must have come over, but where are they? People like Phillippo describe the carvings that were placed on graves.

**G.E. In this one the figure is holding a smaller figure.**

D.B. It is a mother and child. To me this is almost becoming a pieta, a lament using the strings of the violin again.

**G.E. And your use of gold is completely within the tradition of European religious art.**

D.B. Yes, I think what I am doing here is trying to create a sort of surreal icon with the juxtaposition of those two elements that are within Europe and Africa. Those tear lines are something I have actually observed in Arawak sculptures. Art historians to describe them actually call them tear ducts or lines. But a lot of the similar lines you see in African sculptures are actually scarification marks, not tears. I pick up the accidental resemblance to tears. This whole series with the fireplaces grew out of an earlier series in which African masks invaded the palaces of Europeans.

We turned next to the *Memories of Colonization* series, which featured rather stiff and correct looking figures, all of black persons, being bandaged or treated or tortured in some obscure way.

D.B. These are surreal depictions of what I would simply call atrocities, using medical illustrations; just taking accidental illustrations in which black subjects were being bandaged or subjected to various things by white doctors and juxtaposing them with anatomical details like this foot, which sparked in me a feeling of horror at the inhuman treatment of slaves.

**G.E. But surely there is also some suggestion of healing and care, even if the blacks, have been brutalised?**

D.B. Yes?

**G.E. And this recumbent figure with the holes and strings at its solar plexus somehow suggests a musical instrument?**

D.B. These are my embellishments. What has happened in a lot of my works re-

cently is that the motif of the musical instrument adds an element of pleasure, beauty and pleasure, as it does here, suggesting that these elements are always simultaneously present.

We broke off then to talk in more general terms of Boxer's American experience.

**G.E. Was it when you first saw African art in the museums that you became aware of your African heritage?**

D.B. No, not when I saw African art. It was the different treatment that one received as a black person. All at once I became a 'Negro'. For as you know you are called a Negro even if you have only a trace of black ancestry. You know it is very interesting if you look at the laws of the state of Virginia. I think it was up to about 1910 that you were considered a Negro if you had one-quarter Negro ancestry. By the thirties they had changed the laws so you were a Negro if you had one-sixteenth . . . and later they kept changing it so you were a Negro if you had the slightest trace of African. I was at Cornell University when there was the first armed takeover, right there, of a student union building by black students . . . All the forms I had to fill out when making application for admission asked what race you were. Even in the seventies when tokenism was in, and there was also some genuine attempt to reverse the situation, when I applied to Johns Hopkins after graduating from Cornell I got back a letter saying, 'Will you please let us know whether you are a black person for if you are you might be eligible for the Horizon Fellowship'. I wrote them back, 'I would like to be judged not on my race but on my abilities. I have enclosed a copy of my transcript from Cornell University'. I was awarded a Gillman Fellowship, which was an open award, not specially for blacks. You move from this society to one in which you are forced to think differently. Suddenly you become very conscious of your African heritage and you start to investigate it. As an undergraduate I investigated it largely through two means — I immediately registered for a course in African art and became very excited about it; and in a very cursory way through the music of one particular African performer, Miriam Makeba. I attended her performances and bought every record that came out. And I did a whole series of paintings based on Makeba's music in the sixties. A prizewinning painting in the 1969 festival was one of these —

*Liwa Wechi*. I had been doing abstract paintings that were all in blues and whites, inspired by Bach's fugues and so on; suddenly it became necessary to balance these with more vibrant colours, a much stronger rhythmic separation of form, and Makeba was the alcohol that released that series. It was during that period that the image of the lion cropped up, and that lion has become for me the *Lion of Soweto*. I did a protest painting with that title. In the seventies the lion became a dominant motif, sometimes recumbent, sometimes angry. In fact in *The Tears of Sheba* there is a lion at the top which I have thought about as the lion of Soweto. The lion is important too because of its significance in Rastafarian art, as the Lion of Judah. But then always in my art, images are constantly moving and changing into something else . . . I am a great believer in the poetic possibilities of ambiguity.

We next discussed *The Tears of Sheba*, a more compact work than the *Violin for Ingres* because the components are neatly and almost symmetrically compartmentalised within a 'box', or showcase. Boxer pointed out many details I had not observed, such as the subtle shifts away from the symmetrical.

D.B. Sudden shifts take place as in the frames of a movie. Tutu is looking in one direction here and another way in the other panel. The flowers are fading here and brighter there. The bow of the violin here becomes the bow of a bow and arrow. It is a protest work, one of the few works in which I knew what I was doing from when I started. I said this woman is crying. She is crying for what is going on in Africa, in South Africa, and once that realisation hit me the rest of the work developed. Things happened while I was doing it; the hands of the watches became like spears. Parts of watches have become weapons, almost as if the time is running out and the world must do something about it now. The glass balls are tears which have grown to enormous proportions; because I think the whole world is now feeling with South Africa and country after country is finding a way of registering its protest, though I don't think things are happening fast enough. I had to use glass because of the fragility. There is so much going on, [in the assemblage] but of course while you are doing it you are not fully aware. The little balls are tears and you are pouring them on and you get caught up.

I came across a beautiful, beautiful postcard from Sothebys which was actually advertising a sale of antique dolls; there were probably eighteen dolls' heads all lined up, all white except one. These had to be the children of the future from Botha's point of view . . . The assemblage light isn't switched on now, but when it is you see it lit from below and the tears seem to be smouldering.



I started out with Cookhorne by trying to find out what Marcus Garvey meant to him. When did he first hear of Marcus Garvey. Was Garvey a hero to him when he was a child?

R.C. I didn't know about Garvey when I was a child. I knew about Jesus and Columbus, and those kinds of hero. It was later, growing up, and with other students, in high school, I started hearing about Garvey and Selassie and people like those. And with the growing Rastafarian movement it was all around me at that time.

**G.E. Are you a Rastafarian?**

R.C. No. Not exactly. But it was a reality which was necessary for me at that time, earlier on in my life. It was a source to me of confidence.

**G.E. Have you ever felt, in Jamaica, that there was any disadvantage to being black?**

R.C. Sometimes, sometimes. When you look at the social ladder. Maybe because it is a mobile society and you can acquire certain things and move up. You get accepted. But on certain other levels you think there is a disadvantage . . . It's almost inevitable that you have to start out at a lower level.

I then asked him what he thought of Garvey's idea of all Africans going back to Africa.

**G.E. As far as I know when some Jamaicans did get the chance to go back to Africa they really weren't too happy when they got there?**

R.C. I think the whole thing was undermined but not overthrown through our political changes and things. Some people think it's a state of mind, but some think it's a reality, and I still believe people should think it's a reality . . . Like you believe Christ is . . . Some of

us have learnt to accept that the Caribbean is our home . . .

**G.E. You don't feel this is your home?**

R.C. Yes, because we have learnt different things here, and we have a new culture.

**G.E. Would you like to go back and live in Africa if you were given the chance?**

R.C. I have nothing against that, personally; just as how I would like to go to the United States. I would go to the United States just as happily. But I'd probably feel more comfortable in Africa.

**G.E. What do you want out of life?**

R.C. My greatest concern right now is about other people. I would like to see racism abolished and justice [established], whether Africa to the Africans, Asia to the Asians, whatever. Not so much what I personally would like to achieve.

**G.E. How does this affect your work? surely *Backyardism* is the epitome of Marcus Garvey's message? Why should the black man live in a backyard?**

R.C. Right. And why should everyone make him their backyard? You see the teaching of Garvey is so entrenched in the early years it must come out.

**G.E. But you were talking just now of youth all over the world?**

R.C. Because I was political, I was kind of Marxist oriented one time. The whole thing, the whole struggle is not so much racial. It is not saying that black people alone should be free.

**G.E. Would you say that you are still Marxist oriented?**

R.C. I have changed a bit. I used to think that the Soviet Union or some other communist country had the ideal system, but you read more, you listen more, you analyse; and then you come to consider is not so. And then again they are so similar when you see what happen there just like in Western countries. I am not a communist.

**G.E. So what is the drawback there? Not equality or opportunity? Could it be that human beings really aren't created equal, so that some get ahead from the word go?**

R.C. Sometimes I question the whole thing. Sometimes I think man can *learn* equality and sometimes I think we are born equal, and sometimes I think the whole thing is ironical. Some people, given a chance, just become *dog*,



maybe because when people get rich they turn like dogs — that's what I call racists. And also when things get hard people turn into dogs . . . When things are easy it mightn't be so obvious. It might be a little bit subdued — the dog side of somebody.

We then discussed what it takes to enable people to survive as immigrants and make good, in particular the Jewish immigrants in America.

**G.E. The black people came as slaves. What is it they had that enabled them to survive?**

R.C. Maybe that's where the whole identity crisis lies. Maybe we need to find out. But I know that black people always *try* to survive. They always do . . . even when the whole society is structured and systematised so it hardly allows them to survive. You wonder . . .

Next we talked about Marcus Garvey's life and efforts in the United States, the marches and uniforms, and how he was elected, or nominated president of all Africa. Was this idea naive, given the existing political divisions?

R.C. To me it is as naive as saying that God made man out of clay.

**G.E. Do you believe that?**

R.C. No, I don't believe that.

**G.E. What do you believe?**

R.C. (*laughing*) I don't know, but what I am saying is that at that time black people only believed what people forced them to believe. And Marcus Garvey was asserting something of relevance to his people. Something they could look forward to and know that that was their image; and to control a people image is to control a people. And once we have our own image we must can feel — whether superficially or deep down inside — some sense of worth, or hope or belongingness.

I asked Cookhorne what he thought of Garvey's ideal of racial purity and separation.

R.C. I think we should try to get rid of all things that annihilate the whole human being. First of all we get rid of all racial barriers, or first of all get rid of the diseases that are there to destroy the whole human race; then we move it down so we can abolish all the barriers by which we can differentiate one man from another by virtue of colour.

**G.E. Do you think this is possible?**

R.C. Well I feel it is possible, and not only me but scholars.

Here he referred to Wilson Harris's description of a new architecture and a new world order of peace and justice.

**G.E. Did he tell you how to get there?**

R.C. We shouldn't give up trying.

**G.E. You were telling me that *New Gods* is about people looking for new solutions. In your work there is so much black. Black heads, surrounded by black . . . You said South Africa was very much on your mind when you were working on that one. Tell me how you feel about Jamaica in relation to South Africa.**

R.C. I think we are not doing enough — not only Jamaica but the Caribbean . . . I heard that Oliver Tambo is going to pay us a visit soon. That is one way of acquiring first-hand knowledge. When Bishop Tutu came here I felt a bit let down. It was just a social occasion . . . I was looking for a forum where people would sit down and discuss solutions for change. That didn't happen.

We got on to the subject of violence all over the world and I suggested that we weren't doing that badly in Jamaica compared with some other countries. Cookhorne was more pessimistic and insisted that there was a lot of unrecorded violence.

R.C. When I was a child I used to think that people only die when they get old and sick . . . violence in my pictures is shown by not putting features, maybe only eyes.

We discussed the problem of lack of communication in words — not being articulate because of lack of education.

R.C. People are very violent in Jamaica. But there is so much love in that kind of violence. If you see how people greet each other — POW! and that make it sound like gunshot. And the music, and the way people dance with each other. It is so violent.

We discussed the way men made women suffer and women accepted it. Cookhorne explained this as part of the 'dependency syndrome'.

**G.E. That picture of yours about nuclear fallout (*Head in #0*) — it is really terrifying. Do you think the end of civilization is inevitable?**

R.C. I'm saying at one side yes and the

other side says no. I listen to Bob Marley's "Redemption Song" and I get a secure feeling from that.

**G.E. Have you ever done a picture that came directly out of inspiration from Marcus Garvey?**

R.C. Yes, *Black Uhuru*. The central figure was the Statue of Liberty, in the image of a Negro, and the torch was the colour Marcus Garvey spoke about, red, green and black, and behind him was a whole lot of Negro images almost looking like pieces of sculpture and they were massed together in a choir singing the Negro anthem 'Lift every voice and sing'.

#### Notes

1. Eric Cadien was excluded from this project because his works did not deal with this particular theme.
2. Alvin Marriott was born in 1902, David Boxer in 1946, Robert Cookhorne in 1960.
3. Among the fourteen points in his political platform Garvey proposed to build an opera house in Jamaica and turn the Race Course into a park with beautiful gardens. See Beverly Hamilton's article, this volume.
4. Compare the experience of Christopher Gonzalez (*JAMAICA JOURNAL* 20: 2) Also Garvey's own account of how he became aware of colour prejudice in Jamaica for the first time when the little white girl who had been an early playmate was sent to school in Edinburgh and forbidden to communicate with him. *Current History* magazine, published in the U.S.A. in 1916.
5. Cookhorne pays tribute to Edna Manley and mentions the influence on him of *Negro Aroused* in an interview with Sonia Jones published in the Mutual Life Gallery catalogue. If he had been just a little older he would surely have known her personally.
6. See Kofi Kayiga review, *JAMAICA JOURNAL* 19:3.
7. Interview with Sonia Jones referred to above.
8. Ibid.
9. The Chiwara is a ceremonial antelope headdress used by a Nigerian tribe.
10. The year 1922 was when Edna Manley's first Jamaican work, *The Beadseller*, was produced.

*Gloria Escoffery, O.D., artist, poet, journalist, teacher is our regular art columnist.*

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# Garvey's Significance in Jamaica's Historical Evolution

By Rupert Lewis

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**M**arcus Garvey's significance for us is integrally connected to his relationship with Jamaica. This article seeks to examine both that relationship and its meaning.

In considering Garvey's Jamaican image, one is aware of the mythical/prophetic figure that has been so powerfully created in the folk imagination. This mythic perception has been carried on through Rastafari since the 1940s and into the 1960s at the same time that a new wave of Jamaicans were climbing up the social ladder into the middle class through educational achievements, the political parties, the trade union movement, and the church, in fact taking up positions in the state system that the British left behind. But middle-class blacks faced resistance in the public and private sectors, the latter being the area of greatest resistance. These middle-class blacks were therefore ambivalent in their social and political attitudes, and Garvey provided them with a dilemma. For while they were the beneficiaries of his work and of the mass labour upheavals of the 1930s, if they acknowledged his precept and example, they were likely to be rejected by those who supervised the apprenticeship process which preceded independence. The marginalization in Jamaican life of Garvey's wife and co-worker Amy Jacques Garvey during these years, reflects the ambivalence of middle-class black and brown people towards the Garvey legacy.

What brought Garvey back into prominence in Jamaica in the 1950s and 1960s were the independence movements taking place in Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria whose leaders (Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah and Nnamdi Azikiwe respectively) all paid homage to Garvey as an inspiration. This acknowledgement, together with Rastafari protest activity, prompted national recognition. The Black Power and civil rights movements in the United States and the awareness of Garvey's work by Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, whose father was a Garveyite also contributed to renewed recognition. Middle-class Jamaica then



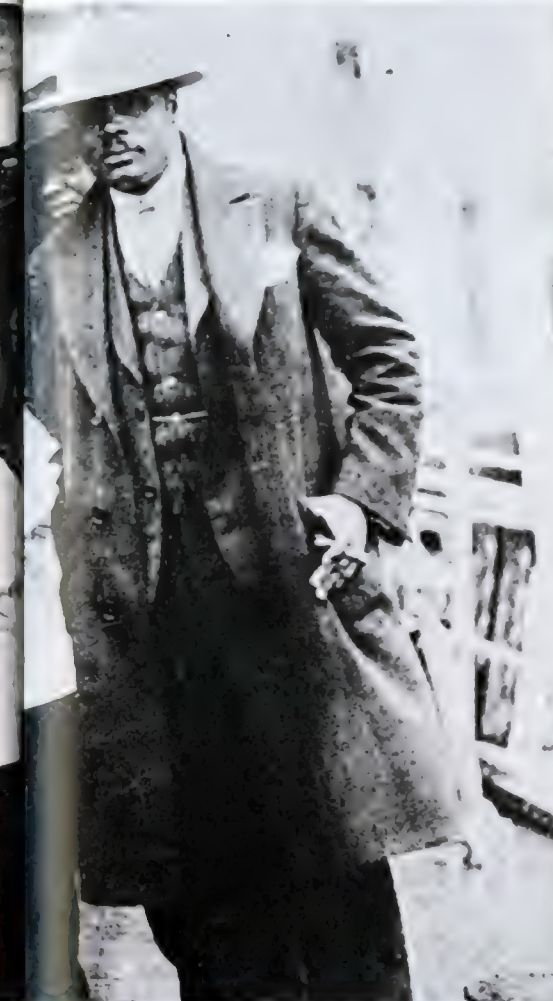
Garvey with supporters in the United States prior to his embarking on the ship that would carry him back to Jamaica, 1927.

began to realise that it was safe and trendy to proclaim he was born here.

Thus the impetus for recognising and understanding ourselves through Garvey has come from outside. This is not to deny the impact of Garvey on the folk imagination but to recognise that this adulation does not determine how Garvey is handled by the Establishment. This 'handling' has become so problematic because he was and is a troublesome and subversive fellow. During his lifetime, a campaign against him was carefully orchestrated by the American, French and British colonial governments. This has now been meticulously

documented. It is therefore not coincidental that an editorial in the *Gleaner* once heralded Garvey's return by declaring 'Trouble Coming'.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, one of the worst things that could be done to Garvey is to sanctify him, to remove him from the real world, to set him up as a saint and therefore to entomb him. Garvey was neither a prophet nor a saint. Not everything he said or did is relevant. He made mistakes, his opinions shifted, his ideas changed. He was taken in by a number of hustlers. He saw race clearly but often erred on the impact of the class and social position of blacks. The mass



Garvey delivering farewell address before deportation from the United States in 1927.

## Trouble Coming?

This month Mr. Marcus Garvey was expected in Jamaica. It had been given out that he would be here on a visit, though it was known by some persons that he was awaiting in New York the decision of the Circuit Court of Appeals on his endeavour to get reversed the sentence passed upon him for using the United States mails for fraudulent purposes. Garvey himself had announced this visit, which suggests that he had hopes of winning free; on Monday, however, instead of Mr. Marcus Garvey, there came to this island news that his sentence had been confirmed, and it is stated that this decision practically closes all avenues of escape to him. He has again been arrested and is now probably behind strong walls; but efforts may still be made to secure his release: indeed such efforts are already indicated. If they do not succeed and he serves the term of imprisonment to which he has been condemned by the American Court, he will on release be deported to Jamaica and then we may have a problem on our hands unless we act with firmness and determination. We suppose that if he did manage to escape from America just now

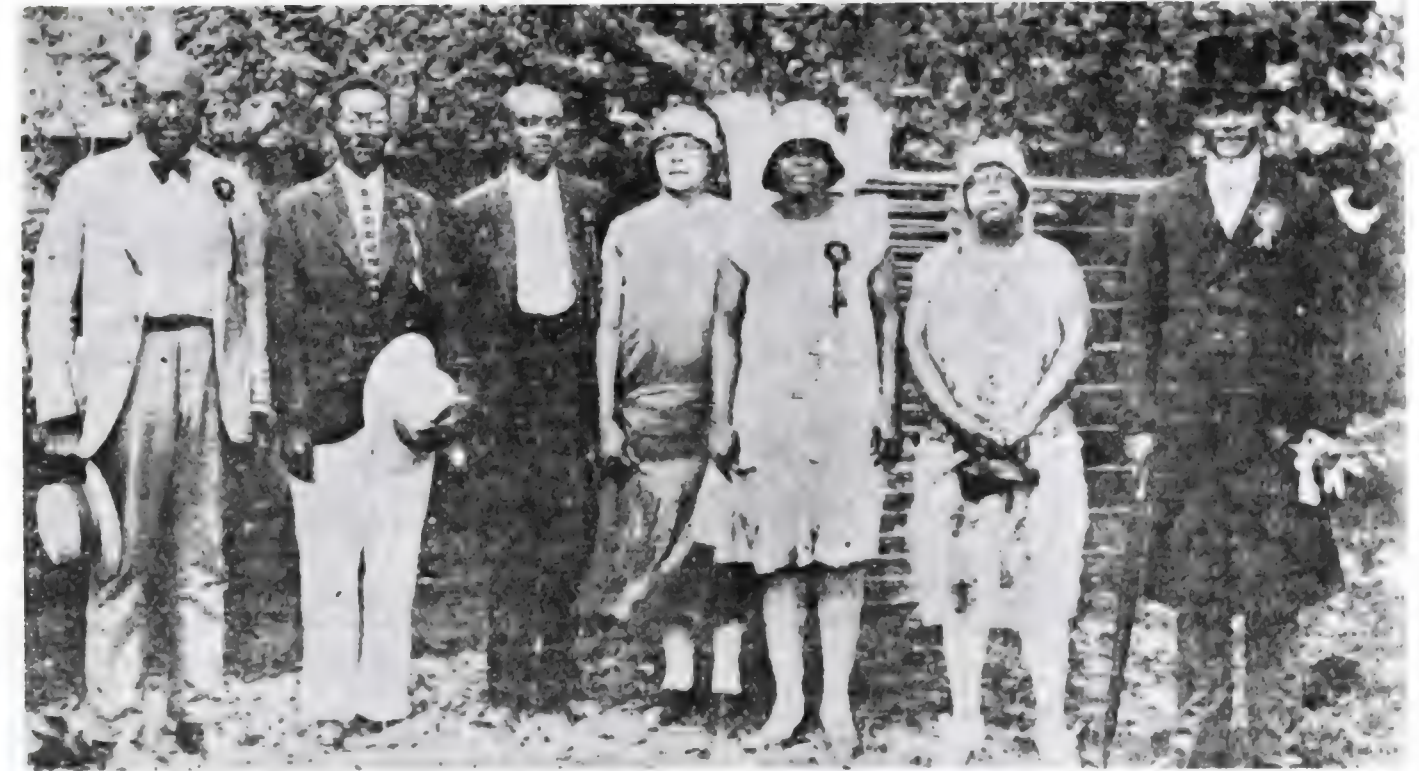
*Gleaner* editorial headed 'Trouble Coming?'



UNIA march in Kingston.



Garveyism in a sense was both racial and non-racial



*UNIA members, Kingston.*

movement he led was a multi-class movement, with different trends and aspirations.

Garvey did not expect his writings to be read in a biblical manner but more as a springboard for 'racial uplift' and emancipation from colonialism. He wanted to be understood, discussed, analysed and taken seriously, for he was an intellectual. But the intelligentsia in the Caribbean, particularly in the post-independence years, have yet to read Garvey and therefore are not in a position to see what he has to offer to the intellectual paradigms which are being developed. Fortunately, Garvey recognised the importance of what he was saying. And so did his followers as well as his enemies. Therefore, although recording technology was still primitive, shorthand writers took down verbatim his speeches on a wide range of issues. Moreover, as a journalist he wrote many articles in the newspapers and periodicals that he founded. So there is a record.

Garvey spent a number of years abroad in Central America and Europe before World War I (1910-14). This distance enabled him to see himself in relation to the colonial world of which Jamaica was only a small and insignificant British dependency. On the other hand, in pre-World War I Europe, Garvey gained an understanding of the significance of Africa and the African diaspora in the New World. The latter became in Garvey's thinking significant in the process of what he called 'African Redemption' — a concept which was rich in nuances for his followers, given its biblical connotations. So while distance enabled Garvey to see Jamaica objectively, the fact is that he was formed here and was to return and actively involve himself in local politics before and after he became a household name.

Too frequently in assessments of Marcus Garvey, a contradiction is set up between his international work and his Jamaican activities. The interconnection is frequently missed because it is not seen that the colonial system was

not a local but an international one and that the system, in turn, was an integral part of the development of capitalism. The superstructure of racism was therefore international or global. The colonial system, to which Garvey was so opposed, affected not only people of African descent, but Asians, Arabs as well as Europeans. Central to Garvey's thought was his recognition of this interconnection and hence his solidarity with Mahatma Gandhi. His praise for the Russian revolutionaries was also based on their endorsement of the principle of the right to self-determination for the non-Russian nationalities; hence also his solidarity with the Irish.

Garveyism in a sense was therefore both racial and non-racial. It was racial because it had to deal with the poison of racial denigration which formed part of the system of colonial power relations. It was non-racial because Garveyism based itself on the idea of the inherent equality of human beings regardless of race. Hence Garveyism was linked to the ideas of humanism and rationalism



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Psychological liberation — trying to rid oneself of the slave mentality — is central to an understanding of Garveyism

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characteristic of the Enlightenment in Europe which preceded the French Revolution.

However, for the Garvey Movement to grow it had to be rooted in the specific circumstances in which he was organising. What he agitated for in Cuba, Panama, Jamaica, the United States and South Africa could not therefore be only based on global issues but on the concrete dilemmas facing people of African descent. Hence one can say that Garvey had a Jamaican agenda connected to his international one. This is borne out in the first programme of the Universal Negro Improvement Association devised in 1914 which was divided into international and local objectives.<sup>2</sup>

These dual objectives underlie his determination to internationalise the questions of colonial subjugation, the ideology of racism and the systems of apartheid that were revived after the abolition of physical slavery during the nineteenth century in the United States, the Caribbean and Latin America. He achieved this objective by the early 1920s in the United States. Garvey's early U.S. experience had a profound effect in radicalising him. In his early years in the U.S. he made a transition from the self-help/white paternalist ideology of Booker T. Washington to a much larger political agenda that was embodied in the historic 1920 Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World.

Garvey was integrally linked with the turn-of-the-century progressive currents in Jamaica. He was active in the National Club which was a nationalist political organisation during the first decade of this century which called for self-government. Garvey was also involved with the short-lived Printers Union (1907-9). But before he left for the U.S.A. in 1916 he was an evangelist who was in search of a programme appropriate to the mission that he set out to establish. He had not yet really arrived at the range of internationalist perspectives that marked his later works, although the elements were there.

Garvey initially adopted the traditional approach of social-reform characteristic of many 'uplift' movements. He paid his respects to his majesty the king and appealed to the colonial governor and other well-placed people in the society for patronage and sponsorship and even said that:

Rich men are the props of all communities, and if were not for the rich men of Jamaica the country would be no fit place to live in, for then villainy and vice and all kinds of evil would be more rampant. It is the rich men who provide work for us and help us to live for we have been unable to do anything for ourselves. Admire your rich men and respect your superiors ... [Hill 1983 p.135].

This was Garvey's interpretation of what Booker T. Washington's programme meant for Jamaica. It may also have represented a tactical manoeuvre on his part (though I think not). This was the period of World War I (1914-18) when colonial governments had as their main goal the mobilisation of their subjects to support the war effort and in this atmosphere Garvey is likely to have perceived himself as 'a true son of the Empire'. [Hill 1983 p.163]. Moreover, he was desperately trying to gain acceptance as a reformer. But Garvey's writings and activities prior to 1915 indicate that he had said and done things contrary to the essence and implications of the statement above which represents a vital pivot of ruling class ideology. Jamaica's political ideology from slavery to the post-independence years has always had this component. It is only in the brief historical moments of popular activity from the time of slave revolts to the twentieth-century labour movements, popular urban and rural protests, or the middle-class-led movements for constitutional reform that challenges have been made to this view.

At the same time, Garvey's emphasis on mental emancipation represents an effort to rid himself of ideas that reinforced social, political, economic and racial subjugation. Hence psychological liberation — trying to rid oneself of the slave-mentality — becomes central to

an understanding of Garveyism. So while the course of uplift reformism characteristic of Garvey in this period was compatible with colonialism, Garveyism later became an ideology in essence incompatible with the colonial system.

There are, for instance, a number of references in Garvey's writings to the 1865 Morant Bay revolt. In an article written in 1913 Garvey enthused about George William Gordon and Paul Bogle:

They sounded the call of unmolested liberty, but owing to the suppression of telegraphic communication, they were handicapped and suppressed, otherwise Jamaica would be as free today as Hayti, which threw off the French yoke under the leadership of the famous Negro General, Toussaint L'Ouverture. [Clarke 1974 p.80].

Garvey's speeches and writings frequently mentioned Toussaint L'Ouverture. So operating in his mind during his early Jamaican years is the tradition of revolt and black assertion. In a speech in 1914 he calls upon blacks to:

take on the toga of race pride, and throw off the brand of ignominy which has kept you back for so many centuries. Dash asunder the petty prejudices within your fold; set at defiance the scornful designation of "nigger" uttered even by yourselves, and be a Negro in the light of the Pharaohs of Egypt, Simons of Cyrene, Hannibals of Carthage, L'Ouvertures and Dessalines of Haiti, Blydens, Barclays and Johnsons of Liberia, Lewises of Sierra Leone, and Douglass's and DuBois's of America who have made, and are making history for the race, though depreciated and in many cases unwritten. (Clarke 1974 p.85).

In an editorial of the *Blackman* newspaper in 1929 entitled "Politics" he returns to the theme of 1865. [Garvey and Essien-Udom 1977 p.169]. These all show that during both his initial and advanced career, 1865 functioned as an important reference point or landmark in Garvey's sense of history and that he located his work in that tradition of resistance.

All the same, Garvey's 1915 correspondence with Major Moton, Booker T. Washington's successor as principal of



Garvey understood very well the nature of power in the modern world, which is why he was so sensitive to the powerlessness of his own ethnic group.

Tuskegee Institute, is of significance in understanding his early thinking. It confirms that he looked to the 'cultured white people of the country', to help promote and legitimise his efforts to set up an industrial farm and institute. But he says:

I have many large schemes on my mind for the advancement of my people that I cannot expose at the present to the public as in such a case my hope of immediate success would be defeated, as my enemies are so many and they are ever anxious to misrepresent me. [Hill 1983 p.178].

He argues that in Jamaica:

We have no open race prejudice here, and we do not openly antagonize one another. The extremes are not between white and black, hence we have never had a case of lynching or anything so desperate. [Hill 1983 p.179].

Garvey points out that blacks here are in a majority and are the economic asset of the country. But, he continues, since emancipation, Jamaican blacks:

have never produced a leader of their own hence they have never been led to think racially but in common with the destinies of the other people with whom they mix as fellow citizens. [ibid].

On the social question he said:

The black man naturally is kept down at the foot of the ladder and is trampled on by all the shades above. In a small minority he pushes himself up among the others, but when he 'gets there' he too believes himself other than black and he starts out to think from a white and coloured mind much to the detriment of his own people whom he should have turned back to lead out of the surrounding darkness. [Hill 1983 p.180].

He therefore recognised that black intellectuals frequently turn against their own people, becoming effective disseminators of colonial ideology. For that is the rationale for their acceptance as 'intellectuals'. All the same, Garvey was conscious of the psychological attitudes which were the unfortunate result of this dispossession in the face of people's natural desire for advancement. Himself a man with an international

standing, he was very mindful of the 'envy and malice' of many Jamaicans, particularly those on the painfully slow climb up the social ladder. In a letter he bewailed:

Very few Jamaicans can appreciate the success of one of their own. Jamaicans are like crabs; no one must climb out of the basket, or out of the barrel. All will unite to pull him back as he climbs... [Hill 1984 p.266].

These responses show an analytical grasp of the sociology of Jamaican race relations. This relationship between race and class is evident in several of Garvey's writings on Jamaica.

### The Back to Africa Ideology

Garvey also understood very well the nature of power in the modern world, which is why he was so sensitive to the powerlessness of his own ethnic group. Garvey's vision is geared towards ensuring that Africans will take their place alongside other peoples as free men. He places a great deal of emphasis on the emancipation of Africa because he sees the continent developing as Europe and the United States have. Whilst always supporting the efforts of those in the Caribbean or the United States towards greater rights and freedoms, he is strongly of the view that these achievements will fall short of the mark until Africa is free. This did not mean, as has so often been stated, that Garvey wanted all Africans to go back to Africa. In 1932 he wrote:

It does not mean that all Negroes must leave America and the West Indies, and go to Africa to establish a government. It did not take all the white people of Europe to come over to America to lay the foundation of the great republic; therefore, those who write disparagingly of the grand programme of Africa for the Africans are doing so without paying any attention to history. [Garvey and Essien-Udom 1977 p.141].

Excerpts from his 1921 speeches when on a visit to Jamaica indicate that he was trying to awaken Afro-Jamaicans to what had been happening in the post-World War I years. He set out to shock. He described Jamaica as the most back-

ward country in the western hemisphere. He decried the self-debasing values of blacks in Jamaica, instructing them that they had the right to take their place in the modern world. He appealed:

Negroes, you want men, you want leaders to point you the way to destiny. The way is long, the road is rocky, it calls for not so much prayers as sacrifice. You Negroes in Jamaica pray too much! (laughter and cheers) With all your prayers you have hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts and everything! You know why! Because God is not satisfied with prayers alone. God says you must work and pray! And you people seem to give up the world to the white man and take Jesus! Don't you know the white man has a right to Jesus, too? Jesus belongs to everybody so you are foolish to give up the world and take Jesus only. You must take part of the world and part of Jesus, too! [Hill 1984 p. 282].

Here, he gets to the heart of how the Christian religion was being used as a diversion from tackling the relations of domination. In fact, he anticipates here what was later to become known as 'liberation theology'.

Garvey also spoke on the topic "Jamaica, her needs and the Negro problem" in Kingston, Morant Bay, Montego Bay and Port Antonio. In his Montego Bay speech he said:

I am not here with any sympathy for the old spirit of Jamaica. I am here to give you if I can a new spirit of manhood. Not the spirit to bow and cringe, to apologize, but the spirit to strike forward for the rights of the Negro people of the world. [Garvey and Essien-Udom 1977 p.93].

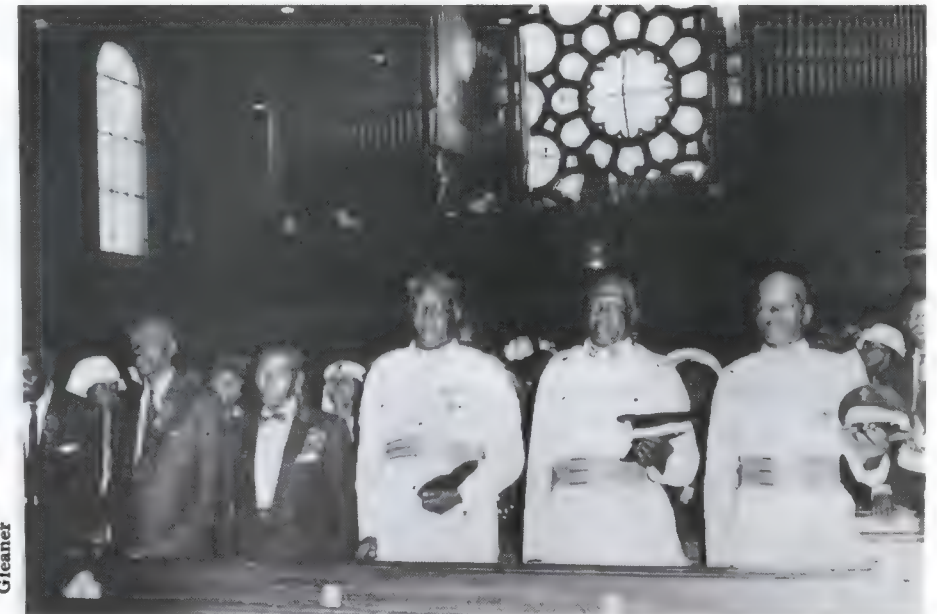
### The Garvey/Price Controversy

A hostile response to Garvey came from the Reverend Ernest Price in an open letter to the people of Jamaica. This letter is as important for what it said as for who wrote it. Price, in commenting on Garvey's speeches, noted that they were heard by large numbers of people. He links Garvey to Bedward who was then active in both his evangelical capacity and in socio-political protest. Garvey was seen as a 'political Bedward' by Price. The reverend gentleman then defends the British

missionary activity, the tradition he represents and which local parsons are pursuing. Mr Price says that no one in Africa knows Garvey and that he is a failure. He tries to ridicule his efforts but does not succeed. It is clear that Price regards Garvey as a serious danger. If Garvey had continued with the Tuskegee idea he would probably have had Price's support. He would certainly have had it if he had continued seeking the legitimacy from the island's white elite as he had been doing prior to 1916.

The British missionary was an intermediary for colonialism, preoccupied with the process of alienating Afro-Jamaica from its cultural and spiritual roots and through this mission, saving souls for the Empire. For this Price was well-suited as he was the foremost representative of the Baptist Mission and founder of Calabar High School. He functioned both in the pulpit and the classroom.

Price's letter was therefore part of an anti-Garvey wave among the colonial ruling circles. Garvey's swift response must be seen in relation to the impact



Gleaner



Gleaner

Scenes from the Mass held at Holy Trinity Cathedral and the burial of the National Hero in George VI Park (renamed National Heroes Park) following the return of Garvey's remains from London. Above: UNIA members marching to their seats; top: uniformed officers of the UNIA at the service; at left: the Hon. R.J. Njoku of Nigeria laying a wreath at the grave.



Gleaner



such an open letter by Price would have had. Price's views would have been commented on in devotion in teacher-training colleges, would have been repeated by preachers in many churches, and would have formed the main topic of conversation on many verandahs. Garvey was therefore not battling with Price alone. He was battling with Price as coloniser for the minds of the local intelligentsia. Hence the tone and content of Garvey's reply published in the *Gleaner*, 5 April 1921. He assumes an air of distance from the paternalism and racism that Price represents and exposes his hypocrisy:

In starting his tirade against me, he addresses the Negro people in Jamaica as 'Brothers'. This man well knows that he uses this salutation as a camouflage. I hate hypocrisy and in this case I cannot but characterize the writer of such salutation, being himself a white Englishman, as anything else but an arch hypocrite... [Hill 1984 p.332].

Furthermore, Price had presented himself as a missionary connected to the abolitionist tradition and invoked that tradition as his credential. Garvey responded:

I take it for granted that the Reverend Gentleman means that his predecessors worked for the abolition of slavery in Jamaica, speaking of fellows like Wilberforce, and Buxton. If he knew anything of history claiming to be a B.A. as he is, he would have known that Negroes did not bring themselves into slavery, that slavery was imposed upon them by his own predecessors, therefore if the said predecessors liberated the said Negroes from slavery they were but performing a duty that would have to be done at some time or the other, to save their own skins. With what happened in Hayti and the threatening attitude of the Jamaican Negro slaves at that time, Wilberforce and Buxton and the rest, saw the handwriting on the wall, and knew well if they had not done something to bring about the emancipation, the people whom their brothers kept in slavery, would have ultimately emancipated themselves, to the loss of certain people not only in cash, but in something more dear to them! [Hill 1984 p.333].

So Garvey exposes Price's 'liberalism' and that school of interpretation regarding the abolition of slavery which was



Captain Thornhill of Harlem, one-time bodyguard of Garvey at Garvey's birthday celebrations held in St Ann's Bay in 1971.

paternalist, anticipating the 'new' historiography of slave emancipation.

On a personal note, Garvey speaks confidently about his achievements:

It is not for me to speak of what I have done, but the achievements of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and of the Black Star Line, stand out as a monument to the sacrifice, energy, and ability of some one. Everybody knows that the Universal Negro Improvement Association has a membership of four million active members. Everybody of sense ought to know that it takes some ability to organise four million people in the space of three and a half years. Everybody knows that the Black Star Line owns three ships and in another couple weeks will own a fourth ship, and ships are not bought by mere cheap words but by hard American dollars and English pounds... [ibid p.335].

And he rebuts:

Rev. Price referred to my failure in starting a Tuskegee Institute in Jamaica. He suggests that it would have been a good thing to have. I can really understand why Mr. Price draws the line at the present time — he would much prefer to see an industrial school where Negroes are taught to plough,

hoe, wash plates, and clean pots, rather than to have Negroes thinking about building up empires and running big steamships across the ocean. Ah! a Tuskegee in Jamaica, would be but the carrying out of the philosophy of Mr. Price. [idem.]

To Price's 'defence' of black parsons and teachers against Garvey's criticism, Garvey affirms the main thrust of his purpose:

I desired to bring home to the men a conviction of their responsibility to the poor struggling people of Jamaica...

and challenges his adversary:

Mr. Price makes out that he is so much interested in Rev. Somers, and that he believes that the Rev. Somers has made a sacrifice to be at home, and that he could do much better abroad. Oh! for the hypocrisy of this world! Does Mr. Price really mean this... If so, why did he not recommend him for the Pastorate of the East Queen St. Baptist Church, being the ablest Baptist Preacher in the country? Why did he encourage his denomination to send all the way to England for the Rev. Tucker, a man who could not loose the shoes of the Rev. Somers, in the pulpit of any church? [idem.]

Although Garvey did not succeed in local politics... he contributed significantly to the awakening that took place throughout the region in the late 1930s.

By highlighting racism within the church Garvey removed the debate from general questions to the particular, thus underscoring the validity of his case. But in order to deal with Garvey, his opponents very frequently could not remain at the level of argumentation and degenerated into scandal and personal acrimony. This feature now characterised the response of the Rev. Mr. Price in a letter published on 6 April.

### Conclusion

The Garvey-Price controversy and the debate over Garvey's speeches in 1921 foreshadowed the most active 1928-34 period of Garvey's Jamaican political activities. Because what he said in 1921 he tried to implement in the early 1930s.<sup>3</sup>

His return to Jamaica was necessitated by his deportation from the United States at the end of 1927 after spending nearly three years in prison. It took him some time to decide to relocate the headquarters of the UNIA here. When he settled on that, he decided to plunge into colonial electoral politics. His programme was a democratic one and he tried to introduce into Jamaican politics the idea of a political party, with a programme reflecting the interests of the black majority. This challenged the status quo with its non-party tradition dominated by large property-holders and merchants who were kingpins in their respective parishes. To effect a more favourable climate of opinion Garvey founded the *Blackman* (1929-31) and *New Jamaican* (1932-33) newspapers. He was also responsible for a remarkable cultural programme which gave expression to his own talents as a playwright and scope for local talent.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, although failing to win a seat in the Legislative Council, he was elected while in St. Catherine prison to a seat on the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation. He used this position to continue his efforts on behalf of the poor.

The decision to leave Jamaica and resettle in London by the mid-1930s was a difficult one. Although Garvey



Garvey's shrine in National Heroes Park

did not succeed in local politics because the odds were very much against him, he contributed significantly to the awakening that took place throughout the region in the late 1930s.

Garvey's significance however is far greater than his excursions into electoral politics. By an enormous effort of political education and organisation, he awakened his people to the possibilities for freedom which slavery and colonialism had denied for centuries. He challenged the class and racial foundations of social oppression, and put on the agenda of international politics the struggle for the twentieth century emancipation of black people, emphasizing both its international and local dimensions. The relevance and significance of Marcus Garvey lies in the pursuit of this unfinished historical enterprise.

The editorial asserted in part: 'whether Mr. Garvey comes here shortly or five years hence there can be no doubt that he will prove a dangerous element in Jamaica...'

- See Garvey's explanation of his original objectives in the *Jamaica Times*, 16 January 1915. This article is reprinted in Hill [1983] pp.103-5. See also p.135.
- For extensive analysis of Garvey's Jamaican years, see Lewis [1987].
- See Tony Martin [1983]. Also Lewis [1987] and Hamilton in this volume.

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### Notes

- See *Gleaner*, 11 February 1925, p. 10. Garvey, of course, was not to arrive in Jamaica until 10 December 1927 after having been deported from the U.S.A.



# Marcus Garvey and the Politicisation of some Afro-Jamaicans

in the 1920s and 1930s

By Erna Brodber

**T**he major works on Marcus Garvey deal with his philosophy and/or his life story. They begin with his wife's two-part compilation — *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*. Mrs Amy Jacques Garvey published the first part of her work in 1923 and the second in 1925. Apart from Mrs Garvey's publication of two volumes of his poetry, there appears to have been no other studies on Marcus Garvey until 1955 when E. David Cronon's *Black Moses* published by the University of Wisconsin appeared. Mrs Garvey had published her husband's speeches, writings and poetry; Cronon now brought Marcus Garvey's life to public attention. His book is sub-titled, *The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*. The most spectacular part of Garvey's life was played on American soil. It is understandable that a book researched, written and published by Americans should focus on the 'obscure foreigner' who born in 1887, 'stepped ashore New York on that bleak March day early in 1916 [when] the American negro world was undergoing a series of profound social changes that would play no small part

in the acceptance of Garvey's leadership by large numbers of American negroes' [p.21].

Garvey was nearly thirty years old when he began his work in America. Most of his early years and many others after his deportation from the United States in 1927 were spent living and working in Jamaica. Cronon's 'story' of Garvey, apart from its first chapter — "A Son is Given" deals very little with the relationship of Garvey to the Jamaican people and he to them. This emphasis on philosophy and life story and the location of Garvey in the United States continues with the other works. In 1963, it was Mrs Amy Jacques Garvey again. This time it was *Garvey and Garveyism*. This was a more detailed treatment of Garvey's life but nonetheless the accent remained on his philosophy and his life history. Adolph Edwards's work, 'a factual exposition' [p.3] came in 1967. This essay, entitled *Marcus Garvey 1887-1940* was published by New Beacon Press and does give us some intimate photographs of Garvey with the Jamaican people in the post-1927 days. We see the sentiment between them:

Never before had the city of Kingston witnessed such a demonstration of love and loyalty. [p.27].

These glimpses, however, come to us second-hand, originating with the *Gleaner* reporter whose selection of shots is naturally limited by what makes news.

In 1972 came Shawna Maglangbayan's *Garvey, Lumumba, Malcolm*. This work published by Third World Press, Chicago, is intended to set right Garvey's political thought which the writer feels is in danger of re-interpretation from 'Aryan supremacist(s) . . . cloaked in sheets of Marxism.' [p.7]. This work naturally deals with Garvey's philosophy. John Henrik Clarke had written the introduction of Mrs Garvey's *Garvey and Garveyism*. In 1974 his own contribution to the study of Marcus Garvey came off the press. This, called *Garvey and the Vision of Africa*, was published by Vintage Books and was a collection of essays by the then Garvey scholars. This is once more a story of Marcus Garvey played — for the most part — in non-Jamaican settings. Two of these essays, however — Amy Jacques Garvey's "The Early Years of Marcus Garvey" and Rupert Lewis's "The Last Years 1934-1940" — acknowledge that

Garvey lived and worked in Jamaica. Still, not much is told of Garvey's relationship with the Jamaican people.

Tony Martin's *Race First* came off the press in 1976 (Greenwood) and has added a great deal to existing knowledge of Garvey, but the addition continues to be in the area of Garvey's philosophy. We know much more about Garvey's thinking with respect to the communists and the Klu Klux Klan and we know more about the fortunes of the Black Star Line, but we still know very little about Garvey's relationships with Jamaicans and they with him. The most recent of the studies is *Garvey, Africa, Europe, the Americas* edited by Rupert Lewis and Maureen Warner-Lewis and published by the Institute of Social and Economic Research of the University of the West Indies in 1986. Rupert Lewis's essay in this collection, "The Question of Imperialism and Aspects of Garvey's Political Activities in Jamaica 1929-1930", does place Garvey in Jamaica but it is with his relationship with the Establishment, principally the British government, rather than with the people around him that it is concerned.

## The Voices in the Crowd

Though the preoccupation of the works described above have been with Garvey's life and philosophy, there are in some of them rare testimonies from the mouths of the millions whose lives these studies say were touched by Garvey's behaviour. There is a little whisper from George Alexander McGuire who styles himself archbishop and primate of the African Orthodox Church. In the preface to part II of Mrs Jacques Garvey's *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, he testifies:

Outsiders fail to understand the psychology of the disciples of Garvey, but the writer of this preface (who is not ashamed to acknowledge that he is an open follower of this great teacher, rather than one of the Nicodemuses who are secret disciples for fear of criticism or opposition) finds the reasons for our devotion in the conviction that no man has spoken to us like this man, inculcating pride and nobility of race and pointing out to a down trodden and discouraged people their star of Destiny. [p.xiii].

In Cronon's work we find another rare testimony. He quotes from a shareholder writing from Panama:

I have sent twice to buy shares amounting to \$125 . . . Now I am sending \$35 for seven more. You might think I have money, but the truth, as I stated

before, is that I have no money now. But if I'm to die of hunger it will be alright because I am determined to do all that is in my power to better the condition of the race. [p. 56].

Then there is in John Henrik Clarke's work, Captain Hugh Malzac's "Memoirs of a Captain of the Black Star Line", but this is more an analysis of the failure of Garvey's shipping project than a personal testimony of how Garvey and Garveyism touched this captain's life. In any case, these whispers are not from Jamaican voices. Yet, Rupert Lewis quoting from the *Gleaner* in his article mentioned above, tells us of Garvey's return home in 1927 that 'no denser crowd has ever been witnessed in Kingston'. It is the intention of this essay to move away from the examination of Garvey and Garveyism and focus instead on the Jamaican people who were in the crowds around Garvey and from whom he might even have got the kind of psychic support which gave him the strength to operate on non-Jamaican soil. Such people are among the ninety senior

citizens whose life histories I have collected [Brodber 1980]. We look first at Cou Meme.

## Cou Meme

Cou Meme whose real name is Mary Nichols would have been called 'fast', 'facet' and stubborn if she were a younger person. Although her voice creaks with age, her memories can still fill her with such excitement that she laughs or hisses her teeth or responds in some other articulate form of body language. Mary Nichols was born in 1886, the year before Marcus Garvey. When she was interviewed thirteen years ago, she was living in a house in Walderston, Manchester — a room and hall with an outside kitchen — with her crippled daughter whom she nursed. This was far too much responsibility for an eighty-seven-year-old person and the untidiness of her house showed it. But there was no such sign of aging in Cou Meme's spirit. This was a woman who was ready to defend herself and her daughter against thieves and rapists: she



Drawings by Heather Sutherland-Wade



slept with a cutlass beside her. This was one of the people who travelled from Jamaica's interior to see the Black Star Liner. Cou Meme speaks with the interviewer:

**What about Marcus Garvey. You never hear anything about him?**

*No sah. Me hear bout the Black Star Line and me see the Black Star Line. [This is obviously a very important event in her experience. She changes the rhythm of her speech to emphasise the event.] Because me go a Kingston go see it.*

**Oh you went just to see it?**

*Just to see it.*

**How you went? How you travel go there?**

*Whole heap of we tek train from Kendal or some go all a Porus go tek train.*

Cou Meme must have been one of those waiting in early 1920 to see the Yarmouth with its officers Cockburn and Mulzac, demit passengers in Jamaica on its way from Cuba.

It appears at this point to have been the Black Star Line and its peculiarity — a shipping line owned, managed and captained by black people — which made Cou Meme leave her income-earning tasks and pay the return fare to be in the crowd of Garvey supporters. More eminent people than Cou Meme were just as impressed by the ship and its peculiarities. According to Captain Mulzac's account in John Henrik Clarke's work to which we have already referred, President Menocal of Cuba was one. At the stop which the ship made in Cuba, 'he expressed great pride in seeing coloured men make their own opportunities in the field of commerce'.

[p.133]. Cou Meme could only give this commercial venture her psychic support: President Menocal gave the ship's officers a banquet and 'promised the support of the Cuban government' for the ventures of the Black Star Line'. [p.133]. Garvey whose brain child this venture was, had given Menocal cause for 'great pride'. Garvey and the movement he inspired gave Cou Meme more than pride. He added another dimension to her sense of self. It was this, in addition to pride, which took Cou Meme out of Walderston and into Kingston in early 1920. She describes to the interviewer the process by which the new sense of self came to her:

**But why were you interested in the Marcus Garvey Movement?**

*I go in Town one time and I hear dem have Marcus Garvey meeting out so and mi bredder seh to mi sey: 'Meme mek wi go Marcus Garvey meetin tinight.' Me sey: 'Nuh must be some fool-fool meeting.' Him seh 'Gal, you never hear dem sinting from you born, so you come wi go.' When mi get ready go, mi dear Ma, de man sey why him hate white people, him granmoder was a slavery time*

*woman and one of the white man come and the woman seh him won't give up black people and de man ketch him and carry him, tie one foot pon dis va eucalyptus tree and dis foot up deh so pon de oder eucalyptus tree and dem count to three and as dem count to three, dem cut de two rope and the eucalyptus tree fly up so, and tear de ole woman in two. An I BAWL you see.*

**Other people bawled too?**

*L-a-w-d* [She is living once more the experience she felt on hearing the speech]. Cou Meme didn't answer the last question, she was too involved with her own emotions.

Cou Meme might have heard the speaker incorrectly; the speaker might have fabricated the story. There is no gainsaying however, the emotional impact which this visit to a Garvey meeting had on Cou Meme. She was now connected to the Afro-Jamaican past. She felt with and for 'slavery time' women. She was connected to the Afro-Jamaican present and to her brother by political ties now, as well as kinship ties. Cou Meme's new perception of herself also coloured her response to her social setting. Cou Meme was asked:

**Then how you feel about white people when you hear that?**

*Lawd, I hate them worseah.*

Her very expressive *L-a-w-d* in the penultimate speech above suggests that in 1973 when she was interviewed, Cou Meme was still feeling the connection with her racial past that had come to her more than fifty years before. This feeling, this black consciousness she attributes to the Garvey meeting. Her interview continues to discuss her feelings towards white people:

*Lawd. Me nuh love dem, Ma. Me a talk the truth, Missis. Me nuh too love dem.*

**But was it Marcus Garvey that influenced you, or you on your own never loved them?**

*No. From the man talk so.*

**Oh. From the man talk so?**

*I don't like them.*

### Bambi And Her Father

The sense of black consciousness which came to Cou Meme in the 1920s had been with other Jamaicans without the help of Garvey. Bambi, for instance. She was twenty-five years old in 1920. She did not go to see the Black Star Liner, nor did she go to see Marcus Garvey when he came to Montego Bay, about twenty miles from Williamsfield, St. James where she lived. Her father went to hear him. The father of Beatrice Williams known as Bambi, must have been quite impressed with what he heard and saw, because what of it he shared with his daughter was still with her in 1975 when she was interviewed. For Mr Williams, Garvey was a man of the people who had 'good education'.

'Me father tell me say, sey him have the cut of Zekel James, . . . ' who must have been a local chap, for Bambi, remembering that the interviewer was foreign to the village and could not have known him, adds 'You no know him, you no know him', and continues to share her father's response to Marcus Garvey and his meeting:

*Him sey him short and him black and him stout and him have a good education because him speak well. But wait, me going tell 'bout him for him go to the meetin and him seh 'black people must open dem eye. Is time now for black people to open dem eye for they keep down too long' and him give plenty address. Me doan remember all what Puppa sey 'bout Marcus Garvey.*

From what Bambi had earlier said in her interview, the bonds between herself and her racial past were already so close that they didn't need the cementing power of the Garvey platform. Her 'Lawd Missis we black people, fi we ginneration we ben meet il' and 'The ole ginneration pay for it . . . Lawd them meet i. Dem meet i' and again, 'Dem meet it Missis, dem ole ginneration dem meet it' is equivalent to Cou Meme's moan, 'L-a-w-d'. It wasn't the memory of a speech made from a Garvey platform that had Bambi so affected. It was the memory of the horrors of slavery as told her by her paternal grandfather. Bambi's exposure to tales of slavery left her with sentiments towards white people very similar to those inspired in Cou Meme by a Garveyite's tale. She says:

*If mi even come and see dem a do a white man anything, me nah talk, no man, I don't business wid it. Me have anything wid de white man! I couldn't business wid it. The ole ginneration pay for it . . . Lawd. Dem meet it.*

But Bambi and her father both knew that despite a black consciousness which made them feel negatively towards whites, they had to 'business wid them'. The problem they now faced was how to get whites to treat them as different yet equal.

One way was to have demonstrably, the skills which whites had. It gave Bambi great pleasure to watch her father as he established through his ciphering skills, his equality with whites. She relates one incident which is redolent with this sense of pride. Bambi's father was a produce dealer and as such frequented the house of the Squire, Judge Hall.

*Used to go up there and buy. And mi father did have good eddication, you know. Yes . . . You know, ole time people when dem tek to book! When dem born wid di gift! I remember one day when we go get up dere, Judge Hall was in his telescopes.*

**Judge Hall was what?**

*Telescopes, was a . . . he was a astral man and me father and Mistress Hall over di table, ciphering. And when . . . me remember many things you know . . . and dem cipher dem. Mrs Hall say:*

*'Mr. Williams is wrong.' Him say, 'No Mistress. I am right and you is wrong.'*

*Mrs Hall says, 'No Mr Williams. I am right and you is wrong.'*

*Puppa say 'No'. Puppa could do sums you see! Wish to God I could a do sums like him. Him do shorthand all de time.*

**Shorthand?**

*Shorthand sums and when him di go down de road you only see di pam-pam-pam-pam-pam and heap down him paper and him done, and him nah wrong you nuh! No, Ma.*

*Mrs Hall say, 'Let me take it to Squire' and him tek di two papers and Mrs Hall come with a little sadness now: 'Mr Williams, Squire say you is right and I am wrong.'*

*The other week Puppa go up again to buy produce. Her son from England. Doctor son come. Mrs Hall wouldn't*

*face the table again you know, wouldn't face Puppa. Him call Doctor and Doctor and Puppa go over de table. Mrs Hall say, 'Now Doctor you must be careful of Mr Williams, he is very clever in Arithmetic.'*

*Bwoy and when mi Pa did mongst de white people, you know, when him mongst de white people, him boasy because he got di eddication you know . . . shorthand you know . . . pam-pam-pam. Doctor go round, two of dem go round. The two of dem do so bram! Him and Doctor get one answer.*

With education her father had equalised and even beaten the whites. Bambi ended this monologue with 'Mi can't forget all those things you know'. One black man had cracked the stereotype that blacks were intellectually inferior to whites. But for the stereotype to be removed, it was necessary that more black men demonstrate their intellectual capacity. Bambi and her father approved of Garvey's message — that black men should open their eyes. But it was as much to them that he spoke well, thus demonstrating publicly that he had 'a good education'. The short, stout, black man, looking just like the local chap 'Zekel James', was through his ease with the English language giving Bambi and her father what they felt they needed — a further sign that the stereotype which whites had of blacks and which hampered the interaction which had to take place between them, could be made to crash.

### Azariah Shand

*'Is we build Llandovery estate.'*

Some men are achievers and like to have excellence around them. Mr Shand is one of them. The hernia which his job as a carpenter at Llandovery left him, is as much a source of pain as a sign of achievement, and joins the house in which he lives and which he had built with his 'own hands', as evidence that Mr Shand did live on this earth. Mr Shand was born at Beverley, a district in St. Ann, in about 1900 and was therefore in his early twenties when Garvey and Garveyism were awakening the black world. Instead of excellence and achievement among blacks, Mr Shand then saw impotence. He talks about how the large estates owned by whites physically choked the aspirations of his kind in the area in which he lived:

*Well, me love, is only this district*







between. Just a few chains right off yah now, it was property. And just as you come down de bottom deh, was the same property. Both of them. And we just in the middle. Amen. Fe one man, man! And then the government buy it out and sell we, as land settlement.

Some change came in 1938 after the rioting masses forced the government to consider redistribution of lands. He continues to list the estates which occupied the lands which the labourers needed to achieve the status of farmer:

... Shawbury, Oh Lawd! Madwell, Matthews Hall, Penners, Hylton Hill, Orange Valley — that was the big property that side. Just in the middle. And the people them works on that estate and get them little money.

Mr Shand was aware that achievement for the mass of people in his area was virtually impossible, given their lack of social and physical space. And he was not being hypersensitive. William Cradwick and A.A. Barclay, the organizers of the government's food production campaign felt this impotence throughout the parish of St. Ann and communicated this finding to Governor Probyn. They wrote:

... the people of St. Ann have our sympathy. The penkeepers have simply out-witted the peasant. Rented them unproductive land which they cleaned up and within two years the proprietors took it back, shoving the peasant out of the parish. [CO 137/742, Despatch 711, 27/9/1920].

Out-witted. And the peasant clearly knew that he was out-witted and that

he was going to be out-witted. A feeling of impotence must follow. Mr Shand's 'And we just in the middle. Amen', and his 'Shawbury, oh Lawd!' are expressions of this impotence.

On to this scene came Marcus Garvey.

The 'man of words' is very well-respected among the Jamaican and Caribbean folk. It is he who chairs meetings, takes the pulpit and is cheered at tea-meetings. His audience listens not just to his message, but to his choice of words and his diction, and gives him points for endurance and for the way he handles his hecklers. Marcus Garvey was a master of the art of public speaking. His excellence and his achievement in this area answered Mr Shand's need to see something else in the parish of St. Ann besides the impotence which comes from being perpetually surrounded by those who will out-wit you.

He went to hear Marcus Garvey in his post-United States days, but remembers only that he was the 'longest chatter' he had ever heard.

You remember anything him used to say?

No. I don't remember what him used to say. But is the most the longest chatter we ever hear! Because Marcus Garvey chat for three hours and him don't call one word two times — that's all me remember (laughs).

#### Hilda Durrant

Mrs Hilda Durrant of Blenheim, Hanover was twenty-six years old in 1920.

Mrs Durrant as a young girl growing up in Hanover was not at all convinced like Bambi and her father that education could break the social and economic barriers which restricted black people's mobility in Jamaica. She says:

What I want to tell you, that education never carry like colour. If you can just read and you educated so til and ... you don't get the position weh the mulatto man get and him don't fit the job. You understand what I mean.

She was a bright student and her teacher Parson Kenny was encouraging her to take 'lessons' towards becoming a teacher but:

... me couldn't walk out mi shoes bottom for that. It was too cheap. Teacher get £60 a year you know, sister.

She went to Cuba as a nursemaid instead.

As the food controllers' comment cited above indicates, migration away from the society — parish or island — was a route which many blacks felt forced to take. Mrs Durrant returned to Jamaica in 1932 like many others who were forced to return when the recession hit Cuba. Mrs Durrant came back to find Marcus Garvey here. In discussing the life of Alexander Bustamante who lived in Blenheim in her youth, Mrs Durrant comments:

... the first man that start to make us open our eyes was that man, the black man there from St. Ann —

Garvey?

Garvey. And then now Busta took ... I don't know what happen, but Garvey had to go —

So when you say Garvey opened your eyes, tell me how. Tell me about that?

Because Garvey mek the people them know that to work fe shilling can't mind we and all that kind of thing.

Did you actually hear Garvey?

Yes. I knew him. I knew him ...

Mrs Durrant did not remember Garvey's name but she remembered the experience of having 'her eyes open (ed)' to the fact that there was an alternative to flight from Jamaica: the worker could demand better working conditions.

#### 'Man-Boy' Fearon

Mr Fearon like Mrs Durrant had scoffed at teaching's miserly rewards. He had been a very bright boy scholastically and otherwise. By age thirteen he had passed the Jamaica Local Examinations. After five years of teaching he left Jam-



aica in 1915 at age nineteen on a sailing boat for Cuba. There he found another route to self-realization: he could be part owner of a shipping company. Mr Fearon had known Garvey and Amy Ashwood who became his first wife, intimately in Jamaica. The relationship with Garvey was renewed in Cuba:

... those were the times when they had the Black Star Line business; I joined the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Up to now [1975], if I turn somewhere around I would find my bronze medal that I have. If I go and search I will find it for sure. I lend them £50 to carry on the Association. And we usually keep meetings for Garvey in Cuba you know. And you can understand ... For those days, I knew it and could speak the language fluently be-

cause if you can't read and write it, you couldn't speak as a platform speaker, for you have to talk exactly that the Spaniards or the Spanish-speaking people could understand what you are saying, for you couldn't go and have meetings and they don't hear what you are saying, that would be against Cuban law.

Mr. Fearon still had and could find in 1975 when he was interviewed, the medal, evidence of his involvement with the movement Garvey founded, involvement with charting a movement whose economic promise was more in line with his talents. The medal was the sign that he had not succumbed to what the society had to offer but had tried to establish something better. The effort was important to this man-boy. Garvey provided the occasion.

#### Garvey and the Politicisation of Some Jamaicans

These then were people who were part of the crowd at Garvey's meetings: Cou Meme, Mr Shand, Mrs Durrant and Mr Fearon, and through her father, Bambi Williams. They became affected by Garvey at different points in their political socialisation and came to him from different parts of black Jamaican society. Cou Meme was, when she attended her first meeting, a casual labourer in Manchester, making her living from breaking pimento and cleaning ginger. She knew she was black and though she was aware that there were people who put blacks in a special category, she had never given that idea much 'ear as partly Jamaica ah so-so black people'. She was also quite aware of Africa as her ancestral home:

Me grandmother and everybody. Yes Ma! Lawd, dem want wi go back a Africa tell dem fool ...

Why?

Sey dem no love Jamaica.

But it wasn't until she went to a Garvey meeting that Cou Meme moved from knowing herself to be black in colour to an awareness of herself as part of a group which had a particular kind of relationship to other groups in the society. Cou Meme became politicised then.

The others in the group presented here had already passed this stage.

Bambi and her father had already heard her grandfather's experience and already had through him a deep sense of the political significance of being black. They were now at the point where they needed to be seen and as a consequence treated by whites as their equal. Mr Williams had already acquired some of the symbols of equality and was on his way to being perceived as such. He had his own mill and copper, was a produce dealer who had the Squire as one of his clients and most important, could cipher better than the Squire's wife and just as well as his 'doctor' son. He needed to know that there were other potentially mobile blacks like himself. He met Garvey. Mr Shand was at the other end of the continuum, caught up in a perception of his people as consigned to non-achievement. Garvey's excellence at public speaking gave him the comfort that the race was not doomed to perpetual impotence.

Mr Fearon and Mrs Durrant did not share that problem. They knew that





Stock Certificate in the Black Star Line, 1919.

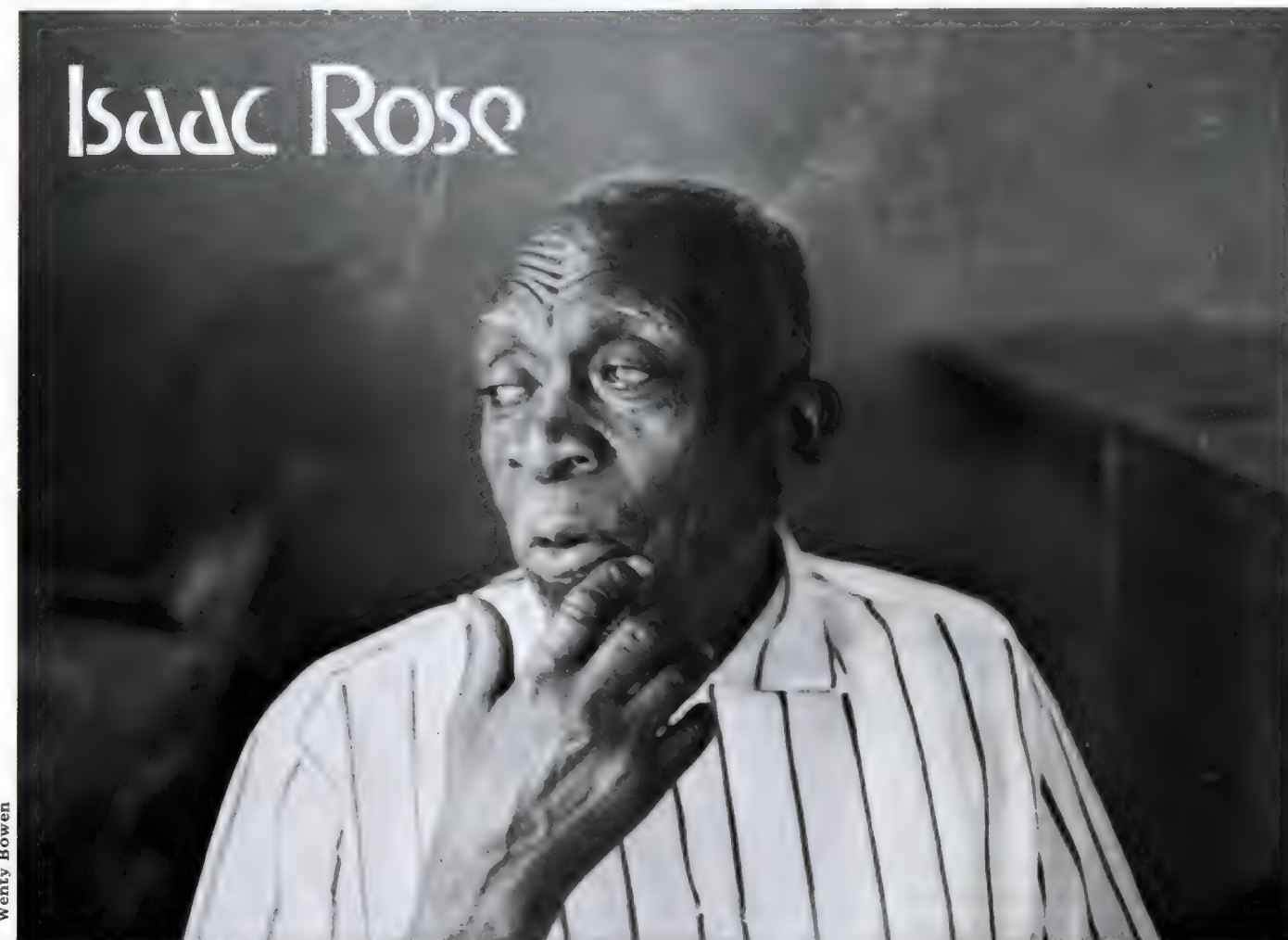
they were achievers. They didn't share the hope of Bambi and her father that education would bring mobility. They already had that. Nor was it the economic independence which Mr Shand might have hoped for: both had lived with economic independence and high social status. Mr Fearon's parents owned and cultivated large tracts of land, and were the king and queen of the Congregational church in the area. Mrs Durrant's father was a large yam farmer who took his ware to the market in Colon in his own boat. Mr Fearon and Mrs Durrant had the trappings of equality with whites but still felt blocked. Their approach to their predicament was to leave Jamaica. Garvey showed them that there was another way to self-actualisation. They could combine to demand a better deal from the system and could establish through similar combination, commercial enterprises as viable as those controlled by whites.

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The Black Star Liner SS Yarmouth.



Wenty Bowen

## Garvey's Boyhood Friend as told to Wenty Bowen

While there are still a few people who remember Marcus Garvey personally, there were only a few who had intimate recollections of Garvey's childhood. One of these was Isaac Samuel Rose of St. Ann's Bay, who died a few years ago.

Mr Rose, who was ninety-one when I spoke to him in May 1974, would have been 104 in this 100th anniversary year of Garvey's birth. Mr Rose, at the time we talked, was an active octagenarian who looked after the Farmer's Coop Store on the town's main thoroughfare. Known affectionately to his many customers as Corpie, he seemed blessed with almost total recall. He had been born in 1884 on the Seville property, St. Ann, in a place they called Nigger House. But let Mr Rose tell his story...

*In the nineteenth century, Seville was a sugar estate and my father Joseph Rose was the man that fed the mill with*

*cane. My mother was Susan Bartwell. She turned the trash outside the cane yard to boil the sugar. My father married my mother when I was a little child.*

*In those days, some of the people who worked on Seville Estate lived on it. That's why they called it Nigger House. They lived in little houses made out of thatch, wattle and daub, paved inside with marl.*

*I had four brothers and altogether there were seven of us, two girls and five boys. I am the eldest.*

I ask him about Marcus Garvey.

*Garvey was born at 32 Market Street but that house pull down now and they put up another one there. My grand-uncle's yard was near it on the other side of the road.*

*The house Garvey was born in was an old board-up house. It was blown down in the 1944 storm.*

He takes me over to Market Street and shows me the house that now stands where Garvey's home was. Then we go to Winders Hill where the Garvey family later lived. There is a mango tree on the hill on what Mr Rose said was Cloisters Property. There are houses at Winders Hill, replacing the one the Garveys lived in. He says the Garvey property was a square and a half-chain both sides. He continues:

*The Cloisters property is Methodist Church property. Mr Garvey senior (Marcus's father) cultivated this church property and the mango tree is on it. Nearby is the priest's house. The priest was Pastor Lightbourne. This was where the Methodist priest lived in Garvey's day and a Methodist parson still lives there.*

*At Winders Hill was a Spanish wall house made by Garvey, senior, a mason. That pull down and gone.*



558 GA Birth in the District of *St. Ann's Bay* Parish of *St. Anne*

| Date and Place of Birth | Name (if any) | Sex      | Name and Surname and Dwelling (place of Father) | Name and Surname and Dwelling (place of Mother) | Signature, Qualification and Residence of Informant | When Registered | Baptismal Name if added after Registration of Birth and Date |
|-------------------------|---------------|----------|---|---|---|-----------------|--|
| <i>1867</i>             | <i>Garvey</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>Garvey</i>                                   | <i>Garvey</i>                                   | <i>Garvey</i>                                       | <i>1887</i>     |  |

Signature of the father: *Garvey* as promoter of *St. Ann's Bay* District, Parish of *St. Anne*

Copy of Garvey's birth certificate.

Garvey was born at Market Street but grew up at Winders Hill where his father bought a piece of land. His father was a good mason. He built my father's home.

Garvey's mother was Emilia, a housewife. They had eleven children but some died. Only two lived. Becheva, a daughter, and Marcus.

Garvey's father was a Christian man, a steward at the Wesleyan Church. A hard-working man. He worked on many churches and used to build tombs.

I know Garvey from a little boy. Me older than him but him bigger than me. He was a big fella. I was schooled at St. Agnes Church School, Priory, St. Ann. I left Priory because I was a strong boy and other boys always try to fight me and I beat them. Then I come to St. Ann's Bay School and there I met with my friend Marcus Garvey. We were schoolmates. We also went to Methodist Sunday School together. The church we went to blow down in 1903 and was built back in 1905.

I could remember once, they had a gallery in the church and all the boys them used to sit in the gallery. The parson would ask us to sing a song and the boys alone would sing that verse or read a psalm. But the boys, them always behave rude up there. So Parson Lightbourne sent Marcus Garvey's father, Mosiah Garvey, up to the gallery to keep the boys quiet.

The breeze blow cool and the old man drop asleep with his mouth wide open.

One of the boys made a cigar out of paper. Heh, heh [Rose laughs at the recollection] and put it in his mouth and light it. Ha, ha. So when the paper nearly burn to catch his mouth, the boys began to laugh.

Marcus turn and looked and said, 'No. You can't do my father that!' And he took up one of the boys, Sanders, and

threw him downstairs, down the steps while the parson a preach.

While church went on, the boys would always write some notes and hand them to the girls downstairs and when them read it, them laugh.

One Sunday we was in class and somebody did 'something'. They poop. Marcus said it was me, 'Rose', he said, 'It's you.'

I said, 'Yes man, you have a trumpet from your ears to me ass.' And the boys them laugh.

When we come outside the church, Marcus said to me, 'Rose, tell me what you tell me in church. Tell me!'

Sanders say, 'Don't tell him nothing, cause he hear already. Is fight he want to fight now.'

Then Sanders turned to Garvey and said, 'It wasn't Rose do it, it's me.'

Marcus say, 'All right, Rose, I apologise to you.'

When we left school — it was a Methodist school — in those days it was all church schools — Garvey went to work to learn printing from his god-father, Mr Elphie Burrowes.

One day I was selling naseberries from a tray and he said, 'Rose sell me some of those naseberry. How you sell them?'

'Six a penny-hapenny.'

Before I could take out the tray, Garvey took out two and when I held down the tray I gave him four.

He said, No, it is six him to get. I said, 'No, you take two already.'

He grab a naseberry from me and we started to wrestle. The naseberry was very mashed up when we part.

Marcus Garvey was a fellow like this: all the time when I meet him he wear jacket and every time, his two jacket pockets full of paper, reading and tel-

ling us things that happen all over the world. Him know I don't know, but him telling us. He was very interested in world affairs.

After Garvey worked with his god-father Mr Burrowes, he got a job in Port Maria working in printing. After that, he left to go to Kingston, and worked at the printing office in Kingston for some time. From Kingston he went to America where I lose sight of him for a time.

We had a man in Kingston named Tom Prang. A big fat fellow. When any of the waterfront workers went to speak hard to the managers, the employers would get Tom Prang to beat them.

Marcus called Tom Prang and told him he must stop it, because did he think any white man would beat him friend for a nigger?

Tom Prang did stop it. He leave Kingston and go to Mo Bay where he died down there.

Isaac Rose left Kingston in 1908, went back to St. Ann's Bay and lived there for the rest of his life, working as a farmer, a policeman and a carpenter. He married in 1914 and had six children, three sons and three daughters, all alive when I talked to him in 1975. By then he had thirty grand-children, twenty great-grand-children and four great-great-grand-children. He had many adventures of his own and became a leader in his community while Garvey travelling the world and living mainly in America, became an international figure. Isaac Rose, however, was to meet his childhood friend one more time.

In 1930 I was in Kingston building the number one railway pier. I lived at No. 7 Bond Street. One Sunday morning a young woman came in the yard and said, 'Mr Rose, you come from St. Ann's Bay?'

Wenty Bowen



Winders Hill, St. Ann's Bay. The Garvey family once lived at this site (above) in a Spanish wall house built by Garvey snr., a mason. That house was pulled down years ago. Below: No. 32 Market Street, St. Ann's Bay, the site on which Marcus Garvey was born but not the original house.

Wenty Bowen



I said, 'Yes.'

She said, 'You don't know Mr Garvey, sir?'

I said, 'Yes, I know him.'

She said, 'Let we go to Edelweis Park this evening, no? To hear him.'

I said, 'yes.'

So in the evening I get tidy and me and the lady went up there.

So when I went up there to Edelweis Park I see a large crowd up there. I took a seat against the walkway and just as it was about to begin I saw the choir come out from this little place. And afterward, bodyguards, about six men, dressed in black pants and white braid, black cap with white braid.

Two of them made an arch with their

swords and Marcus walked under the sword. He was well dressed. I never see a man dressed so. Not even the King of England dress like him. Some robes and all sorts of things.

So, knowing him as I know him and never seeing him dressed like that I said, 'Me Ass, look Marcus!' [Isaac Rose laughs and wipes a tear from his eye].

I enjoyed the service very much. Garvey was one of the greatest preachers I ever hear. Reverend Dillon could preach, but he could not preach like Marcus. Dillon was a Baptist minister here in St. Ann's Bay who went to St. Andrew and died there. He was a great preacher, but Marcus preach better than him.

Marcus Garvey in regalia.

National Library of Jamaica



The next day I didn't work. I went to see Marcus at Edelweis Park and have a talk with him. We talked about two hours and he told me he came to St. Ann's Bay where he was born and he didn't get a good reception. They didn't give him a reception like he would like.

I told him that I was a policeman at the time and was always on duty when he came, so I couldn't gossip, but the people appreciated him very much.

That was the last talk I had with him. Anything else I just heard about.

That Edelweis meeting was packed with people. It was a building with steps coming down. Circular, like the stadium, with a roof. The seats went right round, and his place where he preached was on one side on the middle section. It took about four steps to reach him.

Garvey preached from the Bible, man. He talked about how humans should live to God. How we should keep the Commandments and all those things.

In the service he didn't talk about politics at that meeting. I can remember he said, 'If ye say ye have no sin the truth is not in you, but if you confess your sins to God he will abundantly pardon you.'

Garvey was a prophet, a man that was sent from God. He wasn't no ordin-



ary man. Anything he told you came to pass.

Garvey told us you would see people going through and through the world and that has come to pass. Years gone you couldn't see a man going to England, or America, or Canada.

The Edelweis meeting was orderly. Everybody sit down quietly, everybody dress like a church. It was a church.

Garvey preached on Sunday, morning and night, and during the week they had political meetings where they talked about the UNIA and other things.

The choir was women, about thirty of them, dressed in white. White hats. The men in black caps with white braid around it, the jackets had white braid round the neck, and white braid on the seam of their pants.

The choir started to sing and Garvey come up and take his place in the pulpit. First he would pray, then sing. But people didn't go up after his meeting for blessing.

Garvey was stout, big, with a big head and with a commanding voice. He wasn't bad-looking. He spoke ordinary, plain talk. You could understand all that he said.

His wife was in the choir.

Garvey wore a black pants and a white sash with three different colours on it across his chest, and a regalia, a robe, over him. It yellow. And he had something like a crown on his head.

People felt proud of him. Proud. Anytime he was coming it was a proud meeting.

Though this meeting with Garvey at

Edelweis Park was the last time Rose and Garvey saw each other, Mr Rose also recalled that Garvey had come to St. Ann's Bay earlier, on an electioneering campaign. He recalls that when Garvey returned to Jamaica from the United States:

*They sent him to prison for sedition [actually it was for contempt of court]. Manley was the prosecutor.*

*Garvey went to Cuba then came back and held meetings in St. Ann's Bay. He was around here having meetings and he formed the UNIA of which I was a member. A fellow named Bellamy was the president.*

*At UNIA meetings in St. Ann, Garvey would talk about politics, the movement of the country and bringing the people together. He wanted to bring the Negroes into one body of people. One aim, one object.*

Though Isaac Rose's achievements did not attract national attention, in some ways he was cut from the same cloth as his schoolmate Marcus Garvey. Rose was in his own way also a leader of men, and given different circumstances, he too might have become a household name in Jamaica. As it is, in his area of St. Ann's Bay he was well known, loved and respected. People coming into the Farmer's Coop Store addressed him as Corpie, from his days in the police force, and young men called him 'sir'. It is thousands of men like him, largely unknown and unsung outside of their immediate circle, who are the real makers of Jamaica's history.

Thus, in 1971, Isaac Rose, who was the president of the St. Ann's Bay branch of the Jamaica Agricultural

Society from 1933-71, was honoured by his peers with an illuminated scroll. Among other things the scroll says:

*You were responsible for Farmers getting ten (10) acres of land at Glasgow Avenue as well as lands at Cloisters Property, Lawrence Park and Park Avenue. Among your achievements are the establishment of the New Ground Land Settlement and Housing at Seville Heights.*

*You led the agitation for Seville Property to be made a Land Settlement which is now a reality to farmers in this community and other adjacent districts.*

Mr Rose explained:

*I'm the first man who recommended government to build houses in 1943. I took the parish council to see the Priory slums in St. Ann's Bay, some at Lime Hall, and Steer Town. There was a woman living in a coconut tree lean-to with three children.*

*I took Dr Rerrie, Daryl Strudwick, the parish council chairman, Frank Tennant and Benjamin Yee.*

*Dr Rerrie said he never knew Jamaica was in that condition. Strudwick asked, 'Who was going to build houses for the people'.*

*I said, 'Government.'*

*He said I wouldn't live long enough to see government build houses for the people.*

*I said, 'I mightn't live, but you will live to see the government build houses.'*

*When the storm blow in 1944, the government didn't hesitate to start build houses for people. I, as a carpenter, build plenty of them too.*

This article first appeared in the Jamaica Daily News, as "Isaac Rose, Jamaican Original".

# Sister Samad

## Living the Garvey Life

Interviewed by Maxine McDonnough

Sister Mariamne Samad was born a Garveyite (her father was Guyanese, her mother, American) and has spent her life living up to the ideals of Garveyism. After extensive travels in Africa in the 1960s and 70s she settled in Jamaica in 1976 with her Jamaican husband, Abdul. She spends her time teaching and lecturing on Garveyism and Africa.

**MM: Your parents were Garveyites and you were born at the height of the Garvey Movement in New York?**

**MS:** Yes. I was born exactly five minutes after the third convention of the UNIA in 1922, 12: 05 in the morning. They had to rush mother across the street to hospital.

**Can you tell me what it was like growing up as a 'Garvey child'?**

We had a childhood that was unlike that of other children. Most of the other children looked on us as weirdos, strange children, because we had a code of living that was very strict. We just couldn't do things that other children did. As a child you didn't realise what was happening. But when you grew up you would meet someone from the neighbourhood who would say, 'We used to look at you on the steps and we used to laugh at you because you always wore a uniform'.

**A uniform?**

We wore a uniform. Not to school, of course. But in the afternoons when the other children were out playing in the

Photos courtesy Mrs Mariamne Samad.



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streets, we were off to the Garvey Club so we wore our uniforms. When you were very young it was black socks, black shoes, then when you were Miss Teenage you wore black stockings and black Oxfords with a green skirt, red tie and an oversee cap, you know, the cute little pointed cap, and you were always like you were marching. You didn't even want to be like other children. It was a strange life and I have discovered too, a lonely life. In fact, I could almost say I didn't have a childhood. I was in Garvey Club No. 1, I was a Juvenile. We met at 169 West 133rd Street and I lived at 123 West 133rd so it was always the club, every afternoon after school you went to the club, there was always something going on there. If you went out, you went to the library, you went to concerts, you know that kind of thing, while the other kids on the street played marbles.



The 'Garvey' baby' — Mariamne Samad

But let me go back to my real UNIA baby days when I really didn't know too much about the organisation itself. I went along with my mother and I saw the beautiful men and they chuckled my cheek, you know, the 'Garvey baby' — they called all of us the Garvey babies. My home was a centre, a hub of UNIA doings. Garvey was never a communist but if you were to use a communist term, Garvey had 'cells' of people and our home was one of the cells. A cell is a group of people who gather in a particular place to talk about the functions of that particular ideology or thought pattern that they prefer; sometimes it is a religious one, sometimes it is otherwise, political; ours was a black political cell where I met many people.

I was never a Christian, you know. I wasn't born in the Christian movement so I had no church affiliations. But we had our own Garvey exercises on Sunday mornings, we had choir and stuff like that, from his African Orthodox Church. It was not the Ethiopian Orthodox, it was African Orthodox, because actually Garvey was an African Fundamentalist. People want to know who was he, what was he, he was an African Fundamentalist and if you have ever read that beautiful dissertation called The African Fundamentals — well that's what he was. He was an African Fundamentalist and so were we. So that earlier in life we soon got rid of the word Negro, people like us we didn't use the term Negro except in maybe the preamble, the Universal Negro Im-

provement Association, but you yourself were not a Negro, it was the organisation apart from you — you were black people, you were African people and even Nubian because Mr Garvey he let us know that we were the Nubians from that area that we now call Egypt; we were the builders of the pyramids, all of that is in the African Fundamentals. So that as a child, I grew up with a lot of very serious people. Technically I really could say I never had a childhood, you know I didn't get a chance to skate and bicycle and jump rope and play marbles and fly kites. In fact I never flew a kite until I went over to Guyana and I think that's a thing they do at Easter, and I got a chance to fly a kite at last. But I had no childhood like that.

My childhood was all about this business of getting the mind of the black man to stand tall. The mind to stand tall! Not even the spine yet, but the mind. I grew and I heard that. I moved as a child amongst the legs of grown-ups who were sipping their tea or having their coffee, that's all they could talk about — getting out the newspapers of the organisation.

In the Garvey Movement we had anything that you could want in any outside organisation, it just had different names, instead of being Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts we were called 'Juveniles'. The girl Juveniles and the boy Juveniles. I was a Juvenile from very early.

**And what exactly did this mean?**

Study, studying the catechism of the

organisation, the songs, the poems, every Sunday you had to recite a whole poem no matter how long it was. Every Sunday, certainly once a week, you would get maybe a paragraph of something to learn.

**What poems were these?**

Lots of it, lots of poetry, was written about our culture, Marcus Garvey —

**Oh written by Marcus Garvey himself?**

Marcus Garvey. Because we went to school and we learned all about George Washington and all of those people, everything white you learned in school, but you didn't bring that home or to the organisation. Every day I would go into the bathroom after school and I would put my poem up in the mirror you know, and I would be learning . . . learning that poem, and they expected a poem a week out of us. And being the daughter of Mrs Olman and Mr Olman, I was expected always to be up front. In fact a terrible thing happened to me as a child, because I was the daughter of these two particular people, I was always pushed in the background — I was always brought out front to do something but then when the prizes were given out, it was given out to the children who didn't do as well as I did, and mother always explained to me, 'Now you can't expect me to give it to you, you know, those children have to have it because they don't do it as well as you.'

**Within the Garvey Movement, well among the adults, there were courts, were your parents members of any of these?**

Very much so. In fact, if you saw some of the old pictures you would see how elegant some of those ladies dressed you know. Oh boy! You should see my mother's dresses and those gorgeous shoes and the stockings. They didn't wear uniforms, they wore really — lady this and lady the other, and the duchess of this and the duchess . . .

**What was her title?**

Actually mother didn't have a title like that. Mother was always in charge of the children and she was Mistress Olman. But when I came back to the United States in 1936 (after living for four years in Guyana) and found mother, she had recently left St William Grant's organisation, the division, she was now a member of the Motor Corps in uniform.



Dressed in the Garvey colours of red, black and green the Sankori Nubian Cultural Workshop founded by Sister Samad in the 1950s in Harlem helped to promote black cultural awareness and pride in the African heritage.

(she had gone back to Guyana with us in '32, but she came back in '33 with the new baby and I didn't get back till '36). Before we left in 1932 mother was one of the grand dressers. And I mean grand! The women were wearing derbies, you know, and knickerbockers and things like that and elegant! Women walked into the Garvey Movement with their short riding crops — and they didn't ride horses! It was wonderful, I was very proud of her you know, this lady was so gorgeous. But when I came back she was a different woman. There was my mother in the Motor Corps, a very military woman, a very different lady, you know she wasn't that lovely, fluffy lady any more who worked with the children and taught singing and all that stuff. Now she was a military woman and she was teaching you to march up and down, the boys you know, and she wasn't taking any back talk or even a second look from you. She was a whole different person.

**What exactly were the responsibilities (apart from the marches and parades) of the Motor Corps and African Legion, the soldiers?**

The Motor Corps was into breaking down and taking apart jalopies which is what we called cars in those days, knowing about them. Because there was always this idea in the minds of the adults that the day would come when you would need all of this knowledge. And there were so many different little things that I heard as a child. Take for instance the story of when Garvey went to New Orleans and they met him in the square that Sunday morning because they were expecting him to come and speak and the sheriff came riding into the group you know, he jumped out and he pulled out his gun and he says, 'Mr Garvey you come down from there, you will not speak today' and he looked around and there were hundreds of black people standing with

guns, pointing them straight up in the air.

**These were members of the African Legion?**

No, these were members of the organisation, period. You see in New Orleans you could still carry a gun and the Legion were there but the whole membership had guns. So there was always this idea in the minds of the people that you had to protect Mr Garvey wherever he was or you would have to protect yourself because you are now standing up as a man. So that the Motor Corps knew that they might have to drive an ambulance, they knew that. Now at that time we didn't know where we were going to get the ambulance from, but the adults had this — they were moving towards these things. That's why Mr Garvey had to be broken early, I say this all the time. He had to be broken early because the Motor Corps was about driving ambulances, why do you drive



an ambulance? And military men were learning to fire guns, why do you do that?

**This was a real army that he was preparing?**

You see the people in the Caribbean didn't understand Mr Garvey but the white man understood what Mr Garvey was all about. Mr Garvey was about teaching the darker men of the world and I do mean the darker men of the world, because even the Japanese and the Indians you know, you know Gandhi and those people who had met him, they knew too that they were moving towards this hour. The hour never came because Mr Garvey was the pivot of all this and he was destroyed. You go into reading the story of Mahatma Gandhi who met Mr Garvey in London and Mr Garvey told him, and I read this in one of Mr Mohandas K. Gandhi's own autobiographies, that he had met Mr Garvey and Mr Garvey told him to go home to his people and stop playing around with that monkey suit, which was the suit of the lawyers in those days, he was a South African lawyer, Mohandas K Gandhi. Mr Garvey was the one who told him to 'go home and take care of your people', he went back to South Africa and they treated him so badly and he put on his dhoti or whatever it was, and went to India to the land of his people.

**Can you recall meeting Marcus Garvey?**

No. My mother said that I was three years old when I passed him as a toddler, he sort of tousled my head and he said, 'you're going to grow into a fine woman' so whenever I tell the story I say 'And I did!' No, I was only three years old when he left. Then he would go to jail and then from jail right on the ship back to the Caribbean.

**Can you tell me how women were perceived within the movement itself?**

Grand. I really hadn't thought about it at all until I remembered when I was a teenager there was a member of our Motor Corps whose husband would not join the organisation, he was more or less a no-good, and he used to beat her. He used to beat her and I remember all the Motor Corps women meeting one night at my mother's house and they said to her, 'you know, you can't take this kind of thing. You don't tolerate this type of thing. Do you want us to come up and take care of him?' And I realised that these women were serious. They would have gone there, I don't



*Mr Abdul Samad (in the uniform of Garvey's African Legion) has shared his wife Mariamne's lifelong adherence to the ideals of Garveyism.*

know whether they would have beaten him or thrown him through the window. They were amazed at her, but she was very much in love with him. So that she went through this abuse from him, and the Motor Corps women told her that they would take care of him. And I heard that not too long after when he found that out he left.

**He left New York?**

Yes. Because he realised that these women were coming to get him.

Garveyites not only acted a special way, they looked a special way. It is not beauty I am talking about, it is the manner, the way you dressed, the way you kept yourself. I don't know if you have ever heard, but Mr Garvey would stand up and tell people 'get a 5-cents piece of soap and wash yourself'. Where did he get that from? Was it his St. Ann's background? He told hundreds of people in the hall to 'wash yourself', it means no underarm odour...

**It means the Garvey woman and man had a responsibility?**

Very much, very much. I think it was the *New York Times* that accused Garvey of setting up an organisation of elites. Now elite is not a very nice word, but at that time it meant something elegant, you were different, you didn't have any money in your pocket but you walked around being terribly superior to other people. I remember growing up on

133rd Street and simply saying to the other young people in the block 'hello', and one of the mothers said one day 'why does she talk like that?' And the girls said, 'oh, she always talks like that'. We were Americans, but we were surrounded by these elegant people from the Caribbean who spoke beautifully, you know, the Caribbean people that I knew, that I grew up with, they spoke beautifully, and they were not trying to speak the American way, it was no hyar-hyar-hyar, they spoke distinctly and elegantly. These were Garveyites now, I am not talking about people on the outside, I am talking about people within the organisation, because it seems that belonging to the Garvey Movement meant that you were different. You just didn't do what other people did. We knew people who sold fish, the man who sold us fish he was a Jamaican man, very elegant man, and he would see my mother coming along the street, 'How do you do, Mrs. Olman?' They just seemed to expect this elegance from each other. It was like saying we are a new nation now, we are a new nation, within a nation, and the best of whatever they are, that is what we are. That's what I felt when I was around my adults. We picked it up as children you know, that we are Americans, we may never get to Africa. Within the organisation, this business about back to Africa, we didn't know nothing about that, because Garvey was not a back-to-Africa man, back-to-Africa was a mental thing. Those who would go back to Africa were highly trained.

**Trained in what areas?**

Outside of the academics of course, you know the teachers and the professors, they could go. Those who would be masters at electrical work, plumbing, masters at whatever you did, you knew that you were going to be handpicked for that. You had to know what you were doing, you had to have something to offer to Africa. Now what happened, the New York papers picked this up and they made it into a dirty by-word — 'this is a back-to-Africa organisation'. Not at all. Because if you were not prepared to give something to Africa, offer something to Africa, you couldn't go back to Africa through our organisation. So there were black people picking up and going back to Africa, but every man who went was a master at what he was doing. They were doctors they were lawyers, and the ordinary member knew he was not one of them.

**Recently when we spoke you told me about the UNIA birth certificate.**

Yes. This is another thing that this strange little man, I remember Garvey as a strange little man, because I have been to St. Ann's where he was born and you know you park downstairs and you look up at that little shack of a house — although his original house burned down — and say, 'what kind of dirt is it that this man came out of?' Number one you didn't come into his organisation unmarried, you could come in as a young lady and a young gentleman but you ain't come there and talk about you living together. No shacking up. You had to get married. Many marriages went on in the organisation. They saw young people getting too close they would say 'what you doing about it?' And the baby that was born had to be registered in the City Hall first. You had to be registered under your government. Now can you imagine a man who had come into the United States and had never become a citizen himself, he saw to it that each child was registered first. I remember hearing my mother talking about this, she just thought it was so wonderful because she was born in White Plains, New York and her people had come from Virginia, and she was discussing how 'this man coming in from the Caribbean and he tells us that we have to get married, that the children have to be registered. He is amazing, the man is amazing.' That's how she talked about him, you know. You would be surprised how he was adored. This man, if there was such a thing beyond the prophets, that some human being in our day could be adored, this man was. Now he had plenty of enemies, as a child I heard that too.

Coming back to me as a youngster, very young, I can remember as far back as seven years old, and one of these cell-like meetings and the women would be moving — you didn't hear women talking in the kitchen quaka-quaka, against the parties, there was this quiet movement of women. I remember picking that up as a small child because your mother would turn to you and say, 'Shh-shh' with her finger to her lips, and there was hardly a sound, because the men were discussing and they seemed to smoke very good cigars. I think in those days it was Havana... but they smoked these very elegant cigars and some had pipes. Never saw one of those men smoke a cigarette. And they were always in this, frowning, you know



*Sister Samad with Ruth Prescott, Marcus Garvey's niece.*

what had to be done, and they had something that I would learn someday to be statistics. You know this island, and you would hear so many numbers.

**Were these numbers — members in the Garvey Movement?**

Yes, they would count a lot on how many members they had. In fact if you peruse one of the old magazines you will see how the different countries went and they would all vie with each other and all they were sending in was fifty cents an adult, but that's what made the organisation and getting out the papers on time. I call it a cell, each cell had their ideas to give to Mr Garvey and it would go in. And Mr Garvey himself seems to have been very prolific. It was always 'Mr Garvey said this' and 'Mr Garvey said that'. Some people are questioning how could Mr Garvey say all these things, but I know as a child growing up, everything was 'Mr Garvey said'. Maybe Mr Garvey didn't say all of those things but the people's minds towards this man were so open that anything good was what Mr Garvey said. I remember one day my brother not wanting to eat his spinach, and mother said, 'Mr Garvey wouldn't like that' you know, and he chomped into his spinach, that's the kind of life that I call good.

When you were about three months old

they had this lovely little ceremony, mostly amongst the women, where the baby would get a certificate, an organisational certificate and then when you were about sixteen and you were now qualified by your actions, by your aptitude, you would now be able to receive the certificate of adulthood. To get that certificate on your sixteenth or seventeenth birthday, you had to be qualifying all along. Were you participating? That's the word, participating. What was your attitude in those years? Were you the child who was learning, who learned the poems, who took part in the dances, we had dances on Friday nights for young people. Were you in the sewing classes; the elocution, did you take part in those, you know, learning to speak well, learning to deliver lectures to the adults. Were you in the Juveniles; did you come regularly, what was your attendance sheet? And then when you got to be sixteen you were invited to join either the Motor Corps, or the Black Cross Nurses, the boys were asked into the Legions, but you didn't have them too young in the legions, they remained Boy Scouts until they were about eighteen. Now something happened. In my seventeenth year Garvey died. So that actually I got my certificate but I never made the oath.

**Oath? What was this oath?**

It was known in the world of Garveyism, there was a terrible oath that you had to take, and it was something about 'may my tongue cleave to the top of my mouth if I were to do anything to hurt my race'. It was the oath and many of them were terrified of that oath. I don't know why they would be, because I have lived up to the oath you know, all of these years. But I never took that oath because Mr Garvey died, we got the news that Garvey was dead, I think he died June 10th and we didn't get the news until maybe a week or two later because you know you didn't have television and stuff like that. But I remember mentally promising Mr Garvey when I was seventeen years old, that I would call his name every day of my life until his name began to rise again. Well I have lived to see that happen a long time ago — in the sixties, so I would never have to call it again. But the young people have taken it and gone with it like a ball. But I never took that oath. What amazes me sometimes is that people who took that oath and did disparaging things within the organisation



or to the organisation or to their promise, I saw them come to very sad endings.

I said to my mother, 'Mother, did you take the oath?' she said, Yes, I had to take the oath'. So I said, 'I didn't take the oath'. She said, 'Remember the changeover in the organisation, just about that time everything began to fall apart, so you never got a chance to take the oath', she says, 'but I will tell you, you are a pride and joy to the organisation.' But that always bothered me, that I didn't take that oath.

**Now you've said that you didn't take the oath but you have lived the Garvey life, can you tell me how?**

Every moment of my life. I got married the same year that Garvey died, Garvey died in June and I got married in July. I just couldn't deal with the whole school system anymore. I was supposed to go back in September to finish my last year in high school. I didn't go back, because I knew that there were certain things with me mentally, that I couldn't deal with in the American school system, so I left school. I was to have two children before I went back to school. But every day of my life from the time I was born, to the time that I was a teenager, the four years in Guyana that I lived, I have lived a very different life from most of what you would call Negro or coloured women. I wasn't a finger-popping, gum-chewing, you know, just-do-anything person.

**Well, not with your Garvey background?**

Now, a lot of the girls that I went out with, they moved away from the Garvey organisation and even though they lived a more relaxed life, my life wasn't relaxed, that's about the best way you can put it, I was always on show with myself . . . at home there was a certain way you had to act, a certain way you had to be, and at the same time you had to be very friendly, caring, loving, so it wasn't that you were a scrooge — you didn't act like the other people. Through the years I stayed in the organisation because even though I moved out of the UNIA in the 1940s, because I didn't want the word 'Negro', the stigma of Negro: we became the Universal African Nationalist Movement in the same building with the UNIA Movement. So when Mrs Garvey, the second Mrs Garvey came, she visited both of the organisations, and she knew that we were still part of the Garvey movement. Then as I grew up, grew into a woman, the 1950s, I formed the Sankori Nubian Cultural

Workshop, it's still the Garvey Movement. And everything that I did was in the name of Garvey.

**What exactly were the activities of the workshop?**

Cultural, strictly cultural. It was a re-educative group. We were re-educating ourselves as to who we were to turn around and give it to everyone that we touched. We did fashion shows, we started African fashions as fashions. There are a lot of things that are being called African fashions in today's world, even worn by Africans, that were actually started in Harlem because we took the African clothing that we saw and we stylised it; we started the abubba for the women and I created the dashiki for the men in 1958. It was like giving royalty to the black man. I began to do the weddings of people in the community, African-Americanised outfits. We propagated the story of Shaka, we wanted everyone who was black to know about Shaka. Then I did many years of stage work with Sankori; we did shows in schools, talks, in any school, black or integrated. I put out the red, black and green buttons; I had 1,000 made in the early sixties.

**Was this as a part of the Black Power movement that emerged at that time?**

No, the Black Power movement emerged in the sixties; we started Sankori in the fifties, but we moved along with it; they bought the red, black and green buttons from me and it helped to bring up what they were doing and they chose that colour, because take for instance people like Malcolm X, his father Elijah Muhammad had been a Garvey member. Now one of the things that many people didn't know in the world was that Garvey was also a Muslim, he had taken the salute, the raising of the finger, the One God, One Aim, One Destiny, from Duse Mohammed Ali in England, the editor. But Garvey couldn't bring that to the United States because that was a completely foreign religion to the United States and the United States at that time was based on Christianity. So much so that the Ku Klux Klan who were a Christian-based group, they would not have tolerated it and Garvey knew it, so Garvey had to keep this to himself. However, the movement was developed in the Christian vein through the African Orthodox movement, which borrowed many things from the Roman Catholic church, when the priest moves the lantern with the incense — that was

in it too and the burning of the candles on the altar and things like that. We didn't have any business with communion, we didn't have communion, but we had many other things that he had borrowed from his youth and brought in. Because the majority of the people were from the Caribbean and that's the way they had grown and they would recognise that we were not Roman Catholics any more, or Baptist, Pentecostal, Anglicans or Moravians, you know. Now they were African Orthodox and they could equate one with the other and move comfortably, come to church every Sunday morning, very, very beautiful. We had Sunday School, in Sunday School we had our own catechism of the organisation that also brought in the teachings of the church.

**A controversy has always surrounded Garvey and his introduction of a black Christ and black angels, how did you react to this as a child?**

Loved it, I didn't know no better, he looked like me, you know I could deal with that. From the time I opened my eyes as a child I looked upon the wall and there was black. The controversy was that, when we went into people's houses we'd say, 'Oh, what you doing with that up there?' And you know they would look at us, they were shocked, what else should be up there? And I'd say, 'but you are black, what are you doing?' My friends thought I was kind of screwy!

**And of course there were black dolls too?**

Yes. We had black dolls. I remember my first doll was bigger than me, because they made these huge dolls and my godfather wanted to give me a present, so he didn't buy one of the little ones, he thought I would grow up with the doll you know. In fact I did have her until 1937.

**How long have you been in Jamaica?**

Eleven years now, since '76. I came to Jamaica with my husband; he decided to come home at the age of 62, he retired early. I like living here, not only because it is the land of my husband, . . . but because Garvey was also born here; he is my hero.

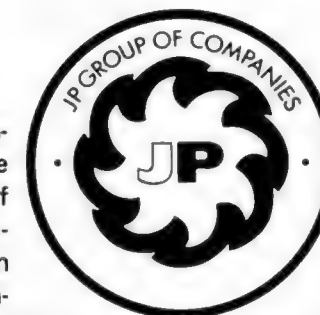
**And since you have been here you have been doing a lot to teach Jamaican children about Garvey?**

Yes, at the Shortwood Community College since '81. In fact, I was teaching Garveyism since 1976 here. I have done fashion shows in churches and



*Men who are  
in earnest  
are not afraid  
of consequences.*

*Marcus Mosiah Garvey*



This statement by our National Hero may justly be applied to the founders of the Jamaica Banana Producers Association Ltd., who in 1927 courageously established a co-operative of some 6,000 banana growers in the island to undertake the marketing and shipping of the fruit.

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On April 1, 1929 the Association shed its co-operative status and became a limited liability company with 6,145 members and a capital of £173.12 divided into 41,664 shares of 1d. each.

Along the way Producers has had many setbacks and has had to overcome many obstacles. Today it is a wholly-owned Jamaican company with a turn-over in 1986 of half a billion dollars.



schools right across the land —

**Again, doing your African stylised fashion?**

Very much so, and a lot of my pieces are authentic because I brought them back from Africa with me. I also teach the philosophy of Marcus Garvey at the Shortwood Community College along with black and African studies — that's two different studies right there. It isn't easy here to teach these subjects because number one, the child goes home, he goes home to a house where grandmother says that Marcus Garvey was a thief! and when the child comes and tells me, 'grandmother says Marcus Garvey was a thief', I say go back and ask grandma what did he steal from her. And they go back and they ask grandma and the grandma sends back a message to me that I am fresh! You know — or upstart — I forgot the word — 'She fas' — she fas' 'because grandmother didn't have nothing to steal you know. And this is why she knows what I am saying. He gave, he gave. Garvey never took anything from them. It's just like

the people in America, had to put down their foot and say that Garvey must not be pardoned. What did he do? He brought dignity to people, which was an asset to the western world. Blacks were an asset once they found out who they were.

**Your teaching is not only through Shortwood Community College. Your home, as a matter of fact, is a repository on Garvey?**

Very much so. Since I have been here every last Saturday of the month has been left open for Garvey studies for anyone who is interested, not just people saying that they want to come, just to be coming, they have to be really interested. So that a lot of people from the university, colleges, high schools have been here to fill in on what they didn't know, especially about Garvey and many times about Africa. Many of the children who are having sessions on Africa will call and ask if they can come. I have letters from students across the country who write to me for you know, written workshops. I do that

too. And my life. Everyday it's a mirror, a looking glass about Africa and Garveyism. I am never caught without my button, and if it is not on my dress it is somewhere in my pocketbook that I can scramble and get it out. I am very blessed, I think I am very blessed to have been able to come to this country.

You ask me what I am doing now. If you were a tiger cub as I was, you were born in the organisation. You remember that when Garvey was in court, someone asked, 'Are you going to let the tiger loose?' And Garvey himself said, when they were arresting him, 'You may cage the tiger but the cubs are running free'. Now, I am a cub, I will always be a cub, a person who really wanted to be a part of the organisation. I couldn't help it, I was born in it, I was in with my parents. But if I stay in it, it is because it really affected me in a positive way. Fortunately for me at seventeen I married one of the Legions who was a Muslim himself and I became a part of what he was, which was exactly what Marcus Garvey was.

## MUSIC

### On Reggae and Rastafarianism — and a Garvey Prophecy

By Pamela O'Gorman

**T**he time was October, 1986; the place Brisbane, Queensland — an Australian state whose political conservatism and backwardness are a source of despair and incomprehension to most other states of a country that works hard, if at times a little naively, at being one of the Commonwealth's more liberal and tolerant nations.

I was walking over the bridge that connects the new multimillion-dollar cultural centre to the city of Brisbane proper and was feeling depressed, having just left the art gallery after searching in vain for even one aboriginal painting. Three-quarters of the way across, my eye was suddenly caught by a lone graffiti, a proclamation in black despoiling the pristine whiteness of the bridge: BOB MARLEY. I stopped dead in my tracks — and all of a sudden found that I was smiling, my depression momentarily gone. What price JA! (Marcus Garvey would have approved, too).

There is, in Australia, an aboriginal reggae group called No Fixed Address. The name of the group is a clever dual reference to the aboriginal practice of periodically disappearing 'on walkabout' and to the customary status of the aborigine in Australian society. The group's performance style is African-American. Only the addition of a didgeridoo for special effects in the bass and a certain nasal quality identify it as belonging 'Down Under'. The song lyrics, composed by a member of the group, are directly descended from the tradition of reggae protest.

*You can't change the rhythm  
of my soul,  
You can't tell me what to do,  
You can't break my bones by  
putting me down  
or by taking the things that  
belong to me.*

*We have survived the white man's  
world,*

*and the horror and the torment  
of it all,  
We have survived the white man's  
world,  
and you know you can't change  
that. [We have Survived by  
Bart Willoughby —NFA]*

The author of an article on reggae published in the **Unesco Courier** [1982] was accurate enough in making the following statement:

The music is obviously an important force within the lives of the black community, whether in Jamaica, the Americas or Europe. In the latter situation it has given strength and resolve to those experiencing the harshness of European racism and prejudice and has forced them to resist these experiences.

The influence of reggae spreads far wider than America or Europe. It has become a political weapon of racial isolates such as the Australian aborigine and of countless others of the world's dispossessed.

Michael Manley in his introduction to **Reggae International** — the most comprehensive and best researched book on reggae to appear to date — draws attention to the revolutionary nature of the Jamaican art form as compared to calypso and blues and its acceptance as part of international culture despite the competition of 'the bromides and anodynes' of synthetic escape music which exist at the other end of the popular music spectrum. He hazards the guess that its success owes much to the originality of Bob Marley whose gifts helped it to gain international acceptance; but, he says, 'it must also be true that the protest of reggae, the positive assertion of moral categories [my emphasis] goes beyond parochial boundaries. Among other things reggae is the spontaneous sound of a local revolutionary impulse. But revolution itself is a universal category. It is this, possibly, which sets reggae apart, even to the international ear.' [Manley 1983].

#### Reggae and Rastafarianism

The source of this revolutionary impulse of which Manley speaks was undoubtedly Rastafarianism which had grown out of, and was continuously renewed by, the teachings of Marcus Garvey. The relationship between the two has been thoroughly expounded by Smith *et al.* [1960], Barrett [1977] and others and need not be gone over here. It is my assertion that the doctrine of Rastafarianism and the militant black consciousness of Garveyism would never have spread with the rapidity they have done, both here and in other parts of the world, were it not for reggae and the African-American musical tradition.

However, it has been the custom of most writers on reggae (especially non-musicians) to approach the lyrics and the music as if they originated from the same source and constituted an organic whole. The belief has grown up that reggae and Rasta are one. This is not exactly true.

Let me say from the outset that what follows here is in no way intended to detract from the contribution of Rastafarianism to reggae. It is merely intended to clarify certain unexamined assumptions which keep being repeated in order to emphasize the Rastafarian aspect of the form. That aspect needs no special pleading. Its record, as far as lyrics and performers are concerned, is unassailable.

When we listen to and analyse reggae, we find that, musically, it owes less to Rasta than to rhythm-and-blues, overlaid with indigenous elements such as mento and Pocomania and to the genius of certain individuals, particularly drummers and bass guitarists who set down patterns that others imitated to the point where they became entrenched traditions.

Nyabingi, the authentic Rastafarian music which, as Kenneth Bilby and Elliot Leib recently pointed out

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[1987], is most likely derived from Kumina as well as Buru, is based on the use of bass drum, funde and repeater. It is an 'inward-directed' religious music with a rhythm pattern quite different and distinct from that of reggae.<sup>1</sup> And according to Yoshiko Nagashima's researches, orthodox Rastafarians 'even look down upon the reggae beats which show the mixed influence [hence "impure" to Bynghi-oriented . . . Rastafarians] such as the spiritual Gospel, mento and revival songs . . .' [Nagashima 1984 p.181].

Musically there is also a clear line of demarcation between the R & B-derived popular tradition that is reggae and the Rastafarian secular tradition, typified by groups such as Light of Saba, which is rooted in drumming, instrumental improvisation, group singing, dance and the conscious incorporation of 'Africanisms'. In Jamaica it has never attracted the numbers of adherents that reggae has.<sup>2</sup>

This is not to say that Rastafarian rhythm patterns are not used in reggae. Occasionally the funde and repeater are added to the percussion section, or Rastafarian rhythm patterns will be utilized by the traps player or bass or rhythm guitarist, but these will be exceptional rather than customary. Reggae is an extremely traditional music that has been content to use a few basic rhythmic constructions. It does not lend itself to experimentation, except in the hands of exceptional groups such as Third World, who have the technical mastery and the solid international reputation that allow for innovation.

Among musicologists, nowadays, some clarity is beginning to emerge from the obfuscation which has been poured out by writers who take a mainly sociological or ideological approach to the Jamaican popular music tradition.<sup>3</sup> Ska is now recognized as a regional variant of a broad U.S. style, namely rhythm-and-blues, in which the shuffle rhythm is exaggerated by placing greater weight and a heavier instrumental texture on the up-beat. [Witmer 1977 pp.105-13].

As for rock steady and reggae, we find that the instrumentation (lead, rhythm and bass guitar, drum set, keyboard and solo voice with vocal backing and optional reed and brass instruments) is exactly the same as that found in North American pop rock of the late 1950s and early 1960s. And many other features such as multiple ostinati pat-

terns, the doubling of the bass guitar by the electric guitar one octave higher, the peculiarly playful vocal timbre and the use of call and response structures are all to be found in African-American music of the late sixties and early seventies.

Witmer [1977] makes a scholarly, low-key, yet persuasive argument for taking into consideration what he terms these 'connections between musical traditions in synchronic proximity' (i.e. U.S. black music and Jamaican popular music), and in doing so, draws attention to the fact so often overlooked that reggae owes much more to African-American popular music than many musicians and researchers are willing to admit.

Indeed, we should not forget that Bob Marley did not attract international attention until the making of the album **Catch A Fire** in which he not only had the necessary time to ensure that the album came up to international standards but he also had available the finance to hire other pop musicians and make use of extra electronic instrumental resources such as electric keyboards and a moog synthesizer, all of which the international market had come to expect. With the added advantage of Chris Blackwell's professional expertise in the field of publicity and promotion he was then ready for the international market. [Clarke 1980 pp.106-7].

Throughout the rest of his career Marley was under suspicion by the purists for having 'sold out' to the First World and every successive album was scrutinized for signs of his having lost touch with his roots. Yet these same purists conveniently and constantly overlooked the essentially commercial nature of pop music and the fact that conforming to certain 'product' standards was the only way in which Jamaica's music could remain on international platforms.

The greatest achievement of Marley and other leading reggae musicians was that they retained the musical identity which had won them a unique place in the world of African-American popular music in the first place: that identity that comes from the singular and elusive construction of the bass riff whose origins go straight back to the mento rumba box, the individual use of the drum set, and its connection with Poco rhythms, the mento-derived approach to the rhythm guitar, and the melodic contours that grow directly out of Jamaican

speech. Also there was the fact that despite occasional sorties into sex, (albeit the unsentimental approach of the African-American tradition) ideologically they never wavered and this, no doubt, won them the trust of their devotees.

A French musicologist, Denis Constant Martin, recently observed in a study on reggae [1983], that Rasta owes more to reggae than reggae owes to Rasta. It is an observation that invites careful consideration by all scholars of Jamaican music.

It is ironic that the Rastafarian message should have been proclaimed by means of lyrics superimposed on a fundamentally Afro-American commercial form transformed into a Jamaican one largely through the addition of traditional features derived from mento and Revival, both of which were rejected by Rastafari.

It is equally ironic that, without the electronic media and the pop music industry, Garvey's message might have been confined largely to intellectual circles and their comparatively limited range of influence. In the space of ten or twelve years more has been done for Rastafarianism and Garveyism than would have been previously possible in a century, if they had been dependent primarily on books or even on the spoken word. Manley also brings out this point in the article previously cited.

Once more, we return to the realization that there is no more powerful communicator of messages than music. The pen may be mightier than the sword, but music is a hell of a lot mightier! Because it is oral and rhythmic and has an instant impact, it tends to pass language barriers with consummate ease; when it is transmitted by means of the electronic media to all corners of the globe, it becomes an irresistible force.

Thus, Garvey's message of black pride and hope for the dispossessed as articulated by Jamaica's Rastafari has reached the ears of millions who might otherwise never have come in contact with either concept. Garvey's time has come, thanks to black American music, Jamaican reggae music, Rastafarian ideology and Western technology. The latter constitutes the greatest irony of all, for it is Western technology that is helping to bring one of Garvey's main prophecies to inevitable fulfilment.

The power and sway we once held passed away, but now in the Twentieth

Century we are about to see the return of it in the rebuilding of Africa; yes, a new civilization, a new culture shall spring from among our people, and the Nile shall once more flow through the land of science, of art, and of literature, wherein will live black men of the highest accomplishments. [Garvey, 1967 p.34].

When Garvey refers here to Africa, it is less likely that he is referring to a geographical location than to a civilization that, in its new form, will have worldwide influence. It is largely music that is responsible for preparing the way for that new culture whose effect will be felt almost on a global scale.

### African-American Music

One of the cultural miracles of modern times occurred in the early part of this century when a previously enslaved people who had preserved their cultural practices throughout generations of degradation and disruption literally took over the popular music of their former masters and transformed it into a totally new musical language.

It came into being at the beginning of this century in the American South and it was destined to become the root from which all popular musics of North America either sprang or by which they were influenced. Spirituals, blues, gospel, jazz, rhythm-and-blues, Tin Pan Alley, soul, Motown, rock and roll, pop, rock, contemporary folk, funky, disco — all owe their genesis and/or their individuality to the mingling of African music with European music. (Even country-and-western is not absolutely free of black musical influence!). Furthermore, throughout the history of North American popular music, the African-American forms of the Caribbean and Latin America have been added as a source of enrichment, bringing renewed rhythmic vitality and appeal to an already powerful musical language.

By means of the electronic media American popular music, the majority of which is Afro-American in style, has been disseminated all over the world in a movement unparalleled by any other musical culture in history.

It took some three centuries and a lot of bloodshed and exploitation for European culture to attain the position of global pre-eminence which reached its culmination in the early part of this century, overlapping the genesis of African-American popular music. It has

taken the latter a mere thirty years to sweep the world. This can be attributed directly to the invention and development of radio and the long-playing record (the latter of which came on the market in 1948, around the same time that rhythm-and-blues developed). In countries which have tried to ban the music, it has inevitably gone underground and because of consumer demand has become a black market commodity (its availability no doubt aided by recording machines and the Voice of America).

Anyone who is alert to musical developments worldwide, must realize that African-American music is about to take the preeminent position which European music once held. It can be observed on a macrocosmic level (the number of countries — even Communist ones — where African-American music has not penetrated are the exception rather than the rule) and on a microcosmic level: in most societies where African-American music is present, it soon becomes the music most listened to by the greatest number of people.

Is there a reason for this?

I feel that there is. From the time when Western beliefs presided over the dissolution of the ancient unity of music, song and dance — a destruction that was initiated by the early Christian church — and when the Western scientific world view adopted the Cartesian separation of body, mind and spirit, there has nevertheless developed a concomitant and growing need for a return to human wholeness, unity and communality, especially in urban societies.

This is a need that the purest black culture has always satisfied. In religion, education, healing, the arts, the unity has always remained. But of all black culture, especially that in the New World, black music is the artistic manifestation that has remained most intact. Throughout the diaspora it has preserved its essential unity, even when it has mixed with white culture, its syncopations and rhythmic drive continuously urging the body to assert itself and move, its compositional patterns and social mores continuously urging a communal sharing that has been lost in Western urban civilization. Its inherent approach to time as a circular rather than a linear element denies the Western search for goals which is termed 'progress' and subconsciously asserts the importance of time in action over

action in time. The message has already been picked up and understood, either consciously or subconsciously, by those who have suffered most from the dehumanizing effects of goal-oriented societies hellbent on 'progress'.

No changes occur suddenly. They are always preceded by a long period of preparation and gestation. For years, black music has been preparing — and continues to prepare — the way for the acceptance of black culture, black attitudes, a different world-view.

One cannot help feeling that, if Garvey were alive today, he would look on this amazing modern phenomenon and recognize it as the manifestation of a prophecy reaching fulfilment.

Surely that great new civilization of which he spoke will come from this hemisphere where the African slave was brought forcibly centuries ago and where he has become a cultural catalyst and a cultural leader with all the potential of changing the face of the world.

### Notes

1. There is a fundamental difference in that Rastafarian rhythm emphasizes the first and third beats of the bar while ska, rock steady and reggae emphasize the second and fourth.
2. In my article "An Approach to the Study of Jamaican Popular Music" [JAMAICA JOURNAL 6:7 1972] I also made the mistake of assuming that Rastafarian music had joined the mainstream of Jamaican popular music. In fact, the Mystic Revelation of Rastafari, which I then hailed as bringing a regenerated instrumental element into the popular form, remained outside it, as did Cedric Brooks's Light of Saba which continued the secular tradition after Count Ossie's untimely death.
3. The length of time this has taken points to the continuing need for a holistic approach to reggae research that includes synchronous musicological, sociological and ethnological investigation. Such an approach might, for instance, lead to a closer examination of the repeated assertion that "O Carolina" was a landmark in the history of Jamaican popular music.



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## Discography

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*Pamela O'Gorman is Director of the Jamaica School of Music and our regular music columnist.*

# CONTRIBUTORS

**The Hon. Rex Nettleford**, O.M. is professor of Extra-Mural Studies, University of the West Indies, Mona, and head of the Trade Union Education Institute. He is artistic director and principal choreographer of the National Dance Theatre Company. His publications include *Caribbean Cultural Identity* (1978) and *Dance Jamaica* (1986).

**Tony Martin**, a well-known Garvey scholar, is professor in the Department of Black Studies, Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts. His publications on Garvey include *Race First* (1976), *Literary Garveyism* (1983) and *Marcus Garvey, Hero* (1983).

**Beverly Hamilton** has done extensive research on Garvey, especially his contribution to culture and the oral tradition surrounding him. Her interest has led her to organise lecture tours and seminars on Garvey in schools. She is a recipient of the cultural interest award in journalism, secretary of the Press Association of Jamaica and president of the African Studies Association of the West Indies (ASAWI).

**Rupert Lewis** is head of the Department of Government, University of the West Indies, Mona. A Garvey scholar of long standing, he is author of the recently published *Marcus Garvey: Anti-Colonial Champion* (1987) and is co-editor of *Garvey, Africa, Europe, the Americas* (1986).

**Maureen Warner-Lewis** is head of the Department of English, University of the West Indies, Mona. She lectures and writes in the fields of Afro-Caribbean literature, linguistics, history and culture. She is the co-editor of *Garvey, Africa, Europe, the Americas* (1986).

**Erna Brodber** is a socio-historian and has done extensive research on Jamaica's social history. Articles published in *JAMAICA JOURNAL* include "Oral Sources and the Creation of a Social History of the Caribbean" (16: 4) and "A Life of Service: The Rev. E.N. Burke Interviewed" (17: 2).

**Wenty Bowen** is publications editor at the Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, Mona. He lectures at the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication (UWI). He has been the recipient of a bronze Musgrave Medal, a Seprod journalism award and a Fulbright/LASPAO Fellowship.

**Maxine McDonnough** is assistant editor of *JAMAICA JOURNAL*. She is currently pursuing an M.A. degree in the Department of English, University of the West Indies, Mona.

**Stephney Ferguson** is director of the National Library of Jamaica. She is president of the Commonwealth Library Association and an executive member of the Jamaica Library Association. She has participated in several local and international seminars on library development.

**June Vernon** is head of the Technical Services Department of the National Library of Jamaica and editor of the *Jamaican National Bibliography*.

# BOOKS & WRITERS

## REVIEWS

By Everton Pryce

**Marcus Garvey: Anti-Colonial Champion**  
Rupert Lewis  
London: Karia Press: 1987  
301 pp. £6.95.

**M**arcus Mosiah Garvey singularly represents the seminal black nationalist and Pan-Africanist of the twentieth century. To persist in the denial of this truism is sheer folly. Through whichever social historical lens we choose to assess him — whether via Marxism, Christianity, liberal democracy, or black nationalism — he has no equal as a leader of a mass movement among blacks anywhere in the world. As a Napoleonic personality in the true sense of the term, he occupies honourably his place within the black redemptive tradition offering a synthesis of spiritual salvation and temporal transformation. To describe him as a 'Black Moses' who precipitated 'a new era of militant Black leadership', is symbolically apt and psychologically correct.

When as a young man Garvey arrived in the United States in March 1916 after travelling extensively throughout the Caribbean, Central America, and England, he quickly discerned that the plight of black people was not reducible to a *feeling* but was rooted in a *condition*. Blacks were up against postwar racist violence and oppression, the denial of political and civil rights and the institutional denigration of their humanity. Black leadership was paralysed by enfeeblement. Armed with a refined sensibility, slender resources, and tremendous courage and determination to succeed despite the odds, Garvey set about the business of challenging the vast material forces and the pervading social conceptions that conspired to destroy the black man's achievement, by ways and means that remain one of the propagandistic miracles of this century.

Through his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and African Communities League, by his passionate belief that Africa was the home of a civilization which had once been great and would be great again, by his slogan, 'Race First', which meant that for him racial conflict was central to world politics, through his itinerant publishing ventures and tremendous propaganda skills expressed primarily through the pages of the *Negro World*, by his organising ability as seen chiefly in the establishment of the ill-fated Black Star Line Steamship Corporation, and by a host of conferences and meetings of African people all over the world, except in Africa, Garvey boldly challenged the slave psychology which still throttles and strangles black initiative by preaching the unification and liberation of Africa as a continent and its people in the diaspora.

At the time of Garvey's appearance on the world stage, European imperialism was already entrenched in the Americas and Africa was divided among the dominant competing world powers. A truly revolutionary nationalistic sound was demanded by this seemingly intractable condition if it were to be broken; and Garvey provided plenty. 'Africa for the Africans', he cried, and in October 1919 ventured to warn: 'I call upon you four hundred million Blacks to give the blood you have shed for the white man to make Africa a republic for the Negro'. Blacks listened, then acted. In Africa, the Ameri-

cas, and the Caribbean, they turned up the heat in the struggle against racism and colonialism, and in America, UNIA organizers quickly established all-black groceries, laundries, doll factories, printing establishments, a hotel, and hundreds of young women joined Garvey's Black Cross Nurses.

The impact of this Mosaic initiative was astounding. Garvey successfully linked the struggle for black liberation with all other dynamic nationalist campaigns in the Caribbean, Canada, Central America, the United States, Ireland, India, and China. He bequeathed to blacks a sense of racial pride and resistance to colonial domination that eventually formed the basis for the political freedoms that swept Africa in the decades after 1940. And although for his efforts he was convicted, jailed, reviled, persecuted and criticised, it is to his lasting credit that he retains the love and admiration of his people even to this day — so much so, that despite his lonely death in London in 1940, four decades later his message of racial pride and dignity remains the fertile soil for the philosophical ethos of the Rastafarian Movement that now prevails upon the consciousness of the black oppressed at home and abroad.

In this context, the publication by Karia Press of Rupert Lewis's book is a timely celebration of Garvey's contribution to black struggle in this century. As a scholarly contribution it represents good, straightforward history interspersed with compassionate comments on Garvey's legacy. Lewis competently emphasises Garvey's struggles against racism and colonialism, specifically within the context of the Caribbean, pointing out that this phase of Garvey's work tends to be neglected in the literature on his life and work. The book sets out modestly to fill the void, but this is overshadowed by the claim of 'examining the Garvey legacy in its true historical perspective . . .' (p.14), which finds the author articulating Garvey's contribution to black history purely in terms of the anti-colonial paradigm. But the author's objective in this book is not entirely problem-free, for the absorbed reader soon discovers that given the breath of Garvey's influence, or what Lewis himself refers to as 'the scope of the Garvey movement' (p. 14), the book narrowly gets away with painting Garvey as an anti-colonial champion *per se* despite himself.

On one level, it makes perfect sense to attempt to do this. The Pan-Africanism which Garvey preached still retains its central vitality as an international and militant tradition of social change throughout the African diaspora, and there is much that the still-to-be liberated can learn from the tradition established by Garvey. But on the analytical level, as to whether Garvey's distinguishing characteristics fall within the anti-colonial paradigm, there are niggling questions not adequately addressed by Lewis.

The articulation of the anti-colonial paradigm both within and beyond the Caribbean was not the monopoly of Marcus Garvey since his initiatives were shared with other anti-colonialist leaders and social movements before and during his rise to prominence. Garvey's Black Star Line Steamship Corporation, for example, more than likely was inspired by the Sinn Fein in Ireland, which had called for the 're-establishment of an Irish mercantile Marine' some ten years before. Similarly, following Sinn Fein's proposal in November 1905 for the 'establishment of an Irish consular service abroad', Garvey in 1914 proclaimed the same idea 'for the



protection of all Negroes, irrespective of nationality'. Even Garvey's slogan 'Africa for the Africans' was influenced by the Sinn Fein's cry for an Irish Free State of 'Ireland for the Irish'. The strong Irish nationalism represented for Garvey a model of resistance to racist exploitation and national oppression, in the same way the East Indian National Association, founded in Trinidad in 1897, had come to represent a model of anti-colonialist resistance. And Garvey's admiration for Mohandas K. Gandhi and Indian nationalist leaders such as Lajpat Rai is testimony to the fact that he was one of the conduits through which the energy of the nationalist campaigns of the period flowed. In fairness, Lewis refers (and often enough) to the influence of the Irish nationalist struggles on Garvey's work, but doesn't follow, analytically, the implications to their logical conclusion.

Moreover, as experience has shown, the 'mass anti-colonial torrents' or campaigns of this century limited themselves, unintentionally perhaps, to self-determination for blacks and oppressed peoples, self-government, equality, freedom from colonial fiefdom and independence.

What Lewis neglects in his portrait of Marcus Garvey is the psycho-cultural superstructure of Garveyism which sustained the anti-colonial thrust — that is, Garvey's call for the ensemble of blacks *qua* blacks in the diaspora. Garvey's vision of blacks in the diaspora was in terms of a worldwide movement of people, capable, strong, and determined, from among whom could be teased out practical lessons and strategies for effective political action as a race of people *per se*. This *race nationalism* was a powerful and daring vision to

have articulated at the time and in terms of its legacy today among blacks in the diaspora, speaks compellingly and more forcefully to the paradigm of *negritude* than to anti-colonialism, important though this continues to be.

The basic problem with Lewis's latest tome is that it gives the feeling of being overrun by events, e.g. publication of the monumental documentations by Robert Hill, the accounts by John Henrik Clarke and Tony Martin, to name just two recent writers and the reinforcement in the popular consciousness of the achievements of this visionary, celebrated in reggae compositions and dub poetry. It seems to be offering nothing that is fantastically new about Marcus Garvey, and therefore fails to soar. Moreover, the index, references and general editing of the book detract from a clear grasp of its thesis.

Despite this, however, it offers much that is important. Lewis undoubtedly succeeds in depicting Garvey as the intellectual that he genuinely was, particularly in chapters 6, 11, and 12, and demonstrates clearly that his manipulation of ideas and his genius at pamphleteering (chapters 5, 8, and 9) are positive contributions to thought about *race*. Significantly, Lewis recognises too that without descending into hagiography, Garvey's achievements ought to be 'celebrated'. To this extent, *Marcus Garvey: Anti-Colonial Champion*, deserves our serious attention.

*Everton Pryce is a political scientist (at Essex University, England), journalist and political analyst.*



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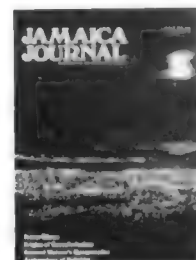
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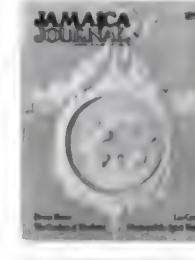
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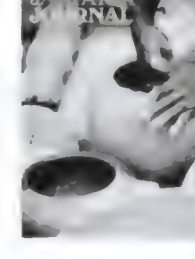
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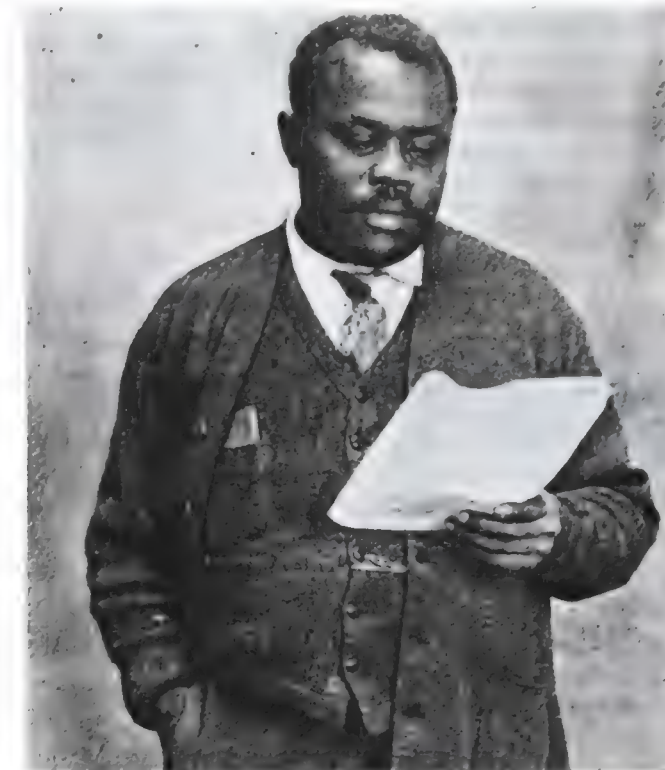
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**Marcus Garvey**  
**A Guide to Sources  
 of Information**  
**at the National Library of Jamaica**

The Garvey Centenary celebrations will no doubt encourage many persons to find out more about Jamaica's first National Hero. This article attempts to provide a guide to information about Marcus Garvey which could help the general public learn more about this remarkable man who is possibly the most studied and the most written about Jamaican of all times. It is by no means a complete listing of the publications on Garvey, but rather a select list



By Stephney Ferguson  
 References prepared by June Vernon



from the material in the National Library's collection.

### Scope

Sources of information on Garvey fall into two major categories, primary and secondary. Primary sources include documents, diaries, correspondence, records and other papers of Garvey and his contemporaries. These can provide information on the man, his philosophy and the organization which he formed. When studied, analysed and evaluated by scholars, they give rise to secondary sources such as books, pamphlets and magazine articles.

This article is mainly concerned with secondary sources. It gives a brief indication of the main thrust of the publications mentioned and sometimes includes quotations from an author's introduction.

Full bibliographical details of the publications are given in the references.

### Bibliographies

Consultation of a bibliography is usually the first step in the study of any subject and the same is true for the study of Marcus Mosiah Garvey. Two bibliographies issued in the 1970s by the West India Reference Library of the Institute of Jamaica list the publications that were available in the library at that time. The first, compiled by Audrey Leigh in 1973<sup>[1]</sup>, and the second, by A. Silvera in 1975<sup>[2]</sup>, are mimeographed publications and include bibliographies, works by Garvey, standard works on Garvey and newspaper articles. A third bibliography (in press) has been prepared by the National Library of Jamaica, successor to the West India Reference Library. This updates the earlier efforts and provides a comprehensive listing of the publications and other material on Marcus Garvey in the National Library's collection. The second in the National Library's Occasional Bibliography Series, the *Marcus Garvey Bibliography* [3] lists international as well as regional and local material on Garvey and his Movement. Annotations are supplied for all local and regional publications which are considered to be less well-known than the international ones. It also lists theses and audiovisual materials.

Of particular interest to the general public will be *Marcus Garvey: An Annotated Bibliography* [4] compiled by Lenwood G. Davis and Janet L. Sims, published in 1980. This lists 562 items with full descriptive annotations of each under the following headings 'Books by Marcus Garvey', 'Articles by Marcus Garvey', 'Major Books', 'General Books', 'Major Articles', 'General Articles', 'Dissertations and Theses'. It also contains the Constitution and Book of Laws of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League. The annotations are clearly written and can be very useful in assisting the general reader to identify publications which present a comprehensive understanding of Garvey's philosophy and achievements. It complements the National Library's bibliography by providing annotations for most of the items included which were published abroad.

Other bibliographies in the collection of the National Library of Jamaica include the six-volume *Dictionary Catalog of the Negro Collection of Fisk University* [5] at Nashville, Tennessee, the two-volume *Dictionary Catalog of the Arthur B. Spingarn Collection of Negro Authors* [6] at Howard University and the New York Public Library's nine-volume *Dictionary Catalog of the Schomburg Collection of*

### *Negro Literature and History*. [7]

The collections of the Schomburg and Fisk libraries are important for their holdings of primary source material on Garvey. (The Schomburg houses a large collection of Garvey material found in an abandoned warehouse in Harlem while the collection at Fisk University includes the private papers of Amy Jacques Garvey and the FBI file on Marcus Garvey).

### Works by Garvey

Although Garvey did not write a book in the true sense of the word, it is fair to say that he left volumes in terms of his speeches, articles, letters, poems and hymns as well as the newspapers which he published. Many examples of these items are included in the library's collection.

Significant among his works are the newspapers and magazines which he published. These include the *Black-man* [8] newspaper published in Kingston 'devoted to the uplift of the Negro race and the good of humanity', starting out as a daily on 30 March 1929, becoming weekly from 29 March 1930 to February 1931 when it ceased publication; the *New Jamaican* [9] published in Kingston from 9 July 1932 to 9 September 1933 as 'a daily paper devoted to the development of Jamaica'; the *Black Man* [10], a monthly magazine published irregularly in London between 1933-39. The complete collection of this journal was published in 1979 with an extensive introduction by Robert Hill.

The newspapers present Garvey's wide-ranging views on a variety of subjects. He explains the principles of the UNIA, urges Negroes to cooperate in the fight for liberty, comments on aspects of world economy and politics, criticizes some of his contemporaries and constantly appeals to Negroes to adopt a positive self-image. He in fact used his publications to maintain contact with his followers and control within his worldwide movement. They also served to promote his entry into Jamaican politics through his forceful advocacy of improved social conditions for the masses. These publications provide valuable insights into the breath of Garvey's interests and the depth of his thinking.

The *Negro World* [11] newspaper published by the UNIA in New York between 1921 and 1933 is also valuable for its inclusion of verbatim reports of many of Garvey's speeches and for the editorials which he contributed. Unfortunately its distribution was suppressed in many British colonies and only incomplete runs are available on microfilm at the National Library.

The well-known *Philosophy and Opinions* [12] which presents Garvey's personal views, although compiled and edited by his wife Amy Jacques Garvey is also considered here as a work of his. She describes it as containing 'gems of expressions convincing in their truths', 'definitions and expressions of various interesting theses', 'essays on subjects affecting world conditions generally and Negroes in particular' and 'two of [his] best speeches'.

### Works about Garvey

During the late 1930s Garvey's work was the subject of research studies by a group of young black writers who participated in the writers programme of the Work Projects Administration of New York City. The Jamaican Claude McKay who had been a writer for the *Negro World* was one member of this group. Although his contribution as a member of the project is not included in the library's collection, his

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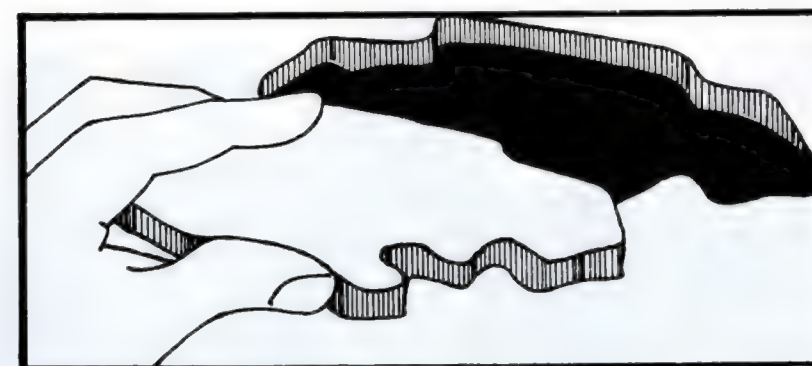
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opinion of Garvey is recorded in his books, *The Passion of Claude McKay* [13] and *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* [14] in which he defended Marcus Garvey, linking 'the flowering of Harlem's creative life' with the Garvey era and recognizing Garvey's achievement in arousing the consciousness of Negroes.

Len Nembhard's *Trials and Triumphs of Marcus Garvey* [15] originally published in 1940 in Kingston by the *Gleaner*, is the earliest full-length biography. This publication is significant as the first in which Garvey's contribution to shaping the new Jamaica is recognized. It also includes information on Garvey's activities in Jamaica after his return from the United States. This 249-page book was reissued as a Kraus Reprint in 1978 with a new introduction by the author.

Edmund Cronon's *Black Moses* [16] which was developed out of a masters thesis at the University of Wisconsin was first published in 1955 and is regarded by some as the standard work on Marcus Garvey. Cronon represents Garvey as an escapist whose rejection of the white world led him to develop a programme of black nationalism which failed because it did not offer satisfactory alternatives to the conditions being experienced by black Americans. He nevertheless regards Garvey as a significant black leader with a distinct philosophy who attracted a large following.

Amy Jacques Garvey's 1963 publication *Garvey and Garveyism* [17] is a collection of personal recollections, documents and newspaper accounts published as a tribute to Marcus Garvey and is important for the primary source materials which it includes.

The year 1967 saw the biographical publication *Marcus Garvey* [18] by Adolph Edwards, a Jamaican, whose brief 45-page book tells the story of Garvey under the following headings 'Early life', 'Work in the United States', 'Work in Jamaica' and 'the Garvey Legend'.

The Black Power Movement of the 1960s in the United States reawakened interest in black nationalism and influenced numerous publications on Garvey by black nationalists or students of black nationalism. In the 1970s several such books were published. These included John Henrik Clarke's *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* [19]; Daniel Davis's *Marcus Garvey* [20], Edmund Cronon's *Marcus Garvey* [21] in the Great Lives Observed Series and Elton Fax's *Garvey: The Story of a Pioneer Black Nationalist* [22]. These publications recognised the universal popularity of Marcus Garvey and his contribution to and influence on black nationalism.

The most significant publications of this period, however, were Theodore Vincent's *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* [23] and Tony Martin's *Race First* [24].

Vincent's 1971 publication was the first major book-length work since Cronon's *Black Moses* of 1955 and presented a re-interpretation of Garvey and his movement, emphasizing Garvey's contributions to black awareness and black nationalism throughout the world and recognizing the UNIA's pre-eminent position as a black nationalist organization.

Tony Martin's *Race First* presents an exhaustive account of the Garvey Movement and is perhaps the most important single publication on Garvey to date. It is written by a Trinidadian scholar whose stated intention was to 'treat Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association with the seriousness and respect which they deserve'. The

book is forcefully written and succeeds in promoting Garvey as 'a major, if not the major black figure of the century'.

The interest aroused in Garvey and his movement which was stimulated by the Black Power and black nationalism movements of the sixties has not abated. The spate of related publications in the seventies has been succeeded by others which throw new light on the subject.

The 1980s saw the birth of The New Marcus Garvey Library consisting of a series of original works on Garvey by Tony Martin. *Literary Garveyism* [25], the first in the series, highlights and illustrates Garvey's 'literary and artistic influence on masses of people' through the weekly paper *Negro World*. It argues that 'the Garvey movement has to be elevated to a position of major importance in the literary epoch of what is popularly known as the Harlem Renaissance'. Several volumes are planned in this series, six of which have already been published.

The Institute of Social and Economic Research of the University of the West Indies also contributed to the works about Garvey by publishing *Garvey, Africa, Europe the Americas* [26] in 1986. This collection of essays was originally presented at the International Seminar on Marcus Garvey organised by the African Studies Association of the West Indies (ASAWI) in 1973. It covers many areas of Garvey's work from different viewpoints and includes presentations from Garvey scholars from the Caribbean, the United States, England and Africa.

The most recent publication is written by Rupert Lewis, currently Head of the Department of Government of the University of the West Indies, Mona. He is a well-known Garvey scholar whose *Marcus Garvey: Anti-Colonial Champion* [27], 'focuses on Marcus Garvey's struggles against racism and colonialism'.

A major work in progress is the Marcus Garvey Papers Project which is being undertaken by Robert Hill, a Jamaican at the University of California, Los Angeles. *The Marcus Garvey Papers and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* [28] brings together copies of thousands of documents in repositories all over the world and is of primary interest to the research scholar. Four volumes of the proposed ten-volume series have been published to date. Among the archival documents included are letters, pamphlets, vital records, intelligence reports, newspaper articles, speeches, legal records and diplomatic despatches which, together with Hill's introduction, descriptive source notes and explanatory footnotes, provide a comprehensive picture of Marcus Garvey and his worldwide influence through the UNIA. This series promises to be an invaluable source of information for Garvey scholars and for the serious researcher, will serve as a parallel to the bibliographies and published catalogues which help the general reader to identify information on Garvey.

#### General Books

Many general works have been published which contain important sections on Garvey. They fall into two main categories. The first category is by far the most extensive and consists of books of international significance. They examine the rise of black nationalism, the role of the Negro in American history, black leaders in the world, Afro-Americans, the oratory of Negroes and such similar topics. Over a hundred titles fall into this grouping, the most popular of which in-



clude a biographical publication entitled *Great Negroes past and present*[29] as well as Marcus Boulware's *The Oratory of Negro Leaders*[30] which in chapter 5 deals with Marcus Garvey, comparing his voice of authority with that of Jesus Christ which people heard gladly.

Other favourites include *Black Leaders of the Centuries*[31] which devotes one chapter to Marcus Garvey and African Nationalism and *Red, Black and Green*[32] which in chapter 3 attributes the creation of racial pride among black people throughout the world to the profound and lasting contribution of Garvey and the UNIA. Also in this group is the *World's Great Men of Color*, Vol. II[33], another well-known work. It portrays Garvey as an autocratic dictator-type leader whose cause was just but whose methods were poor. It predicts, however, that Garvey's success in arousing blacks and whites to examine the race problem in a new light, will cause him to be remembered and idealized more and more with the passing of time. One of the more recent publications in this category is *Black Leaders of the 20th Century*[34] edited by Franklin and Meier and published in 1982. In chapter 6 Lawrence Levine describes Garvey as a 'charismatic leader who offered his followers a sense of pride and esteem by celebrating the glories of the African past'.

The second category is of more local significance and deals with aspects of Jamaican history. James Carnegie's *Some Aspects of Jamaica's Politics, 1918-1938*[35] identifies Garveyism and the UNIA as important factors in the movements which led to the modern political development of Jamaica. Similarly, George Eaton in his *Alexander Bustamante and Modern Jamaica*[36] recognises Garvey's impact on the political development of Jamaica. Philip Sherlock in *Norman Manley: A Biography*[37] noted that 'Manley's work was made possible by Garvey who gave to blackness a new dynamic personality, animated the great majority of the people with hope and confidence, kindled their interest in changing their conditions through organized political activity ...'

## Garvey and Religion

Those wishing to explore this theme may find the following books useful: *Garveyism as a Religious Movement*[38] which includes sections on 'Garvey as a Black Theologian', 'The Religious Ethos of the UNIA', 'Sect or Civil Religion' and the 'Clergy in the UNIA'.

Roderick McLean's *The Theology of Marcus Garvey*[39] presents 'Garvey as the pre-eminent Black Theologian' describing his theology as 'based on an exegesis of Black existence, both in its chronological and cultural essence, and from the divine perspective'.

A local publication written by Barbara Makeda Lee entitled *Rastafari : the New Creation*[40] provides the link between Garvey and the Rastafari Movement.

## Periodical Articles and Pamphlets

Articles and pamphlets on Garvey are numerous, and it is difficult to deal with them in any structured way. The National Library's most recent bibliography identifies a number of these, differentiating them from newspaper articles.

What is significant about these articles is the range of viewpoints which they represent. They include the hostile and the sceptical, characterised by those published in the

*Messenger* and the *AME Zion Quarterly Review*; the reportage in *Time* and the *New York Amsterdam News*; the analytical articles in scholarly journals such as *Journal of Negro Education*, *Race* or the *Journal of Negro History* and even the popular type articles as carried by *Ebony*.

The pamphlets on Marcus Garvey are for the most part photocopies of journal articles which have been bound separately or are short publications which originate locally or within the region. Examples of the latter include the *Proceedings of the 1981 Symposium on Garveyism*[41], the Trinidad and Tobago publication *From the Maroons to Marcus*[42] or the publication of the Pan African Secretariat of Jamaica [43] which describes Garvey's belief and work for his race.

## Newspaper Articles

Selected newspaper articles contained in the library's Garvey bibliography list over 100 items from locally published newspapers dating back to the *Daily Chronicle* of August 1914 - December 1915. Most of the articles are from the *Daily Gleaner* but there are a few from *Public Opinion* and the *Star*. These articles chronicle the views of the Jamaican public and their responses to Garvey over the years. These clippings along with programmes, announcements of events associated with Garvey and the UNIA and other documents are compiled in the *Garvey Biographical Notes*[44] and the *UNIA Historical Notes*[45] files maintained by the library.

## Audiovisual Materials

Audio cassettes of interviews as well as recordings of the presentations at the ASAWI-sponsored International Seminar on Marcus Garvey in 1973 are among the audiovisual materials at the National Library. Also included is a tape of the speech "Africa for the Africans" reported to be in Garvey's own voice. The video cassette *Marcus Garvey: Towards Black Nationhood*[46] a documentary made in Germany which was shown on JBC-TV earlier this year, is also in the collection.

The collection of photographs and negatives is representative of Garvey and his activities. The file titled *Marcus Garvey* has been compiled by the National Library of Jamaica from newspapers, books, and journals. The file also includes some original photographs donated to the library. There are various photographs of Garvey, formal portraits - some in his UNIA president-general uniform, others with his family or reviewing a parade. The file also includes scenes of UNIA rallies, the Black Cross Nurses on parade, advertisements of concerts at Edelweiss Park and ships of the Black Star Line. Also available are portraits of Amy Ashwood Garvey and Amy Jacques Garvey. Other files contain portraits of some of Garvey's contemporaries and officers of the UNIA.

## Other Material

The collection also includes some theses from masters and doctoral studies undertaken by students at the University of the West Indies and American universities. These studies are concerned with Garvey's work as well as his movement and the influence which he has exerted through his teaching. The works of Robert Hill and Rupert Lewis are among these.

It has been estimated that altogether nearly a thousand books, pamphlets and journal articles have been published on Marcus Garvey and it is likely that the interest generated by the centenary celebration will result in many more publications. The National Library's collection is by no means comprehensive. We will therefore welcome donations of documents,

programmes, photographs and other memorabilia.

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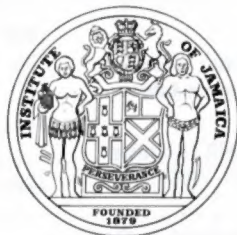
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### MARCUS GARVEY CENTENARY IOJ Calendar of Events

Divisions and associate bodies falling under the IOJ umbrella are offering a feast of seminars, exhibitions and special events to mark the Garvey Centenary (including this special issue of **JAMAICA JOURNAL**). For details on each event, please telephone the division or agency concerned.

**African-Caribbean Institute of Jamaica** — a seminar series "The Garvey Years: A Living History", May-December.

**The Junior Centre** — The summer workshop 13 July -28 August will be devoted to the Garvey Centenary, ending with an open day for participants to display their talents.

**National Gallery of Jamaica** — The Annual National Exhibition scheduled for January 1988 will include prize-winning entries in a Garvey Art Competition.

**National Library of Jamaica** — An exhibition on Garvey opened in July and will continue until December. The NLJ is also issuing study kits on Marcus Garvey for schools.

**Natural History Division** — "Marcus Garvey Centenary: An Ethno-botany Exhibition" will be on display until December.

**Jamaica School of Dance** — Summer School 6-31 July dedicated to Marcus Garvey. Theme is "Black Consciousness — then and now through Caribbean Arts". There will also be a symposium, "The Aesthetics of Negritude".

**Jamaica School of Drama** — Summer School 6-31 July. Theme: "Then and now through Caribbean Arts". Play titled "Mamba Mas Rabat" on a Garvey theme will be staged 2 October with School of Hope performers.

**Jamaica School of Music** is planning a symposium on Jamaican popular music as a tribute to the Rt. Excellent Marcus Garvey.

### THE INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA

Jamaica's national cultural institution was founded in 1879. Its main functions are to foster and encourage the development of culture, science and history in the national interest. It operates as a statutory body under the Institute of Jamaica Act, 1978 and falls under the portfolio of the Prime Minister.

The Institute's central decision-making body is the Council which is appointed by the Minister. The Council consists of individuals involved in various aspects of Jamaica's cultural life appointed in their own right, and representatives of major cultural organizations and institutions.

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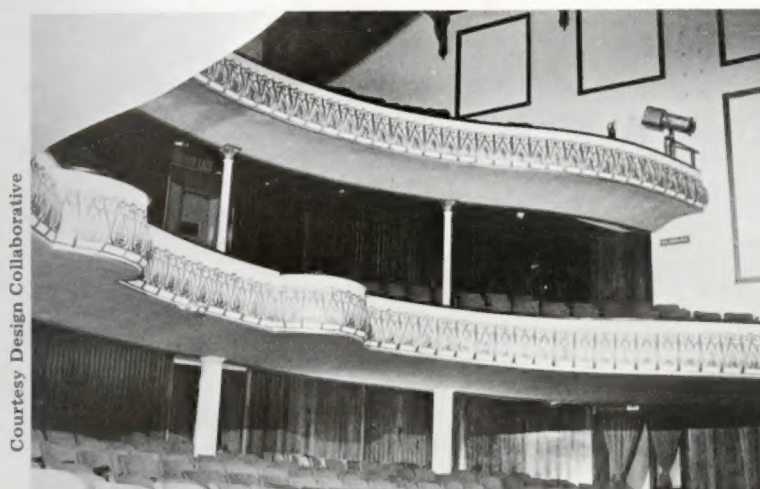
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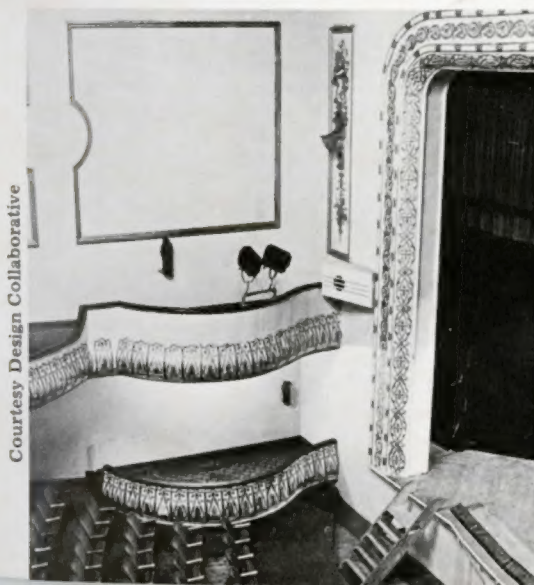
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## THE WARD THEATRE

The historic Ward Theatre occupies a site at North Parade in downtown Kingston which has been in continuous use as a theatre since 1774. The present structure was built in 1912 and replaced one destroyed in the 1907 earthquake. It was presented to the city by Colonel James Ward, Custos of Kingston and a partner in the firm of J. Wray and Nephew Limited.

The theatre cost £9,000 and was designed by Rudolph Henriques and built by the Henriques Brothers. The proportions of the reinforced concrete structure reflect the elegance of the Georgian style while the decorative motifs are Victorian. The canopy over the main entrance is a particularly good example of the wrought iron and glass work which was very much in vogue at the time. The lion's head motif appears thirteen



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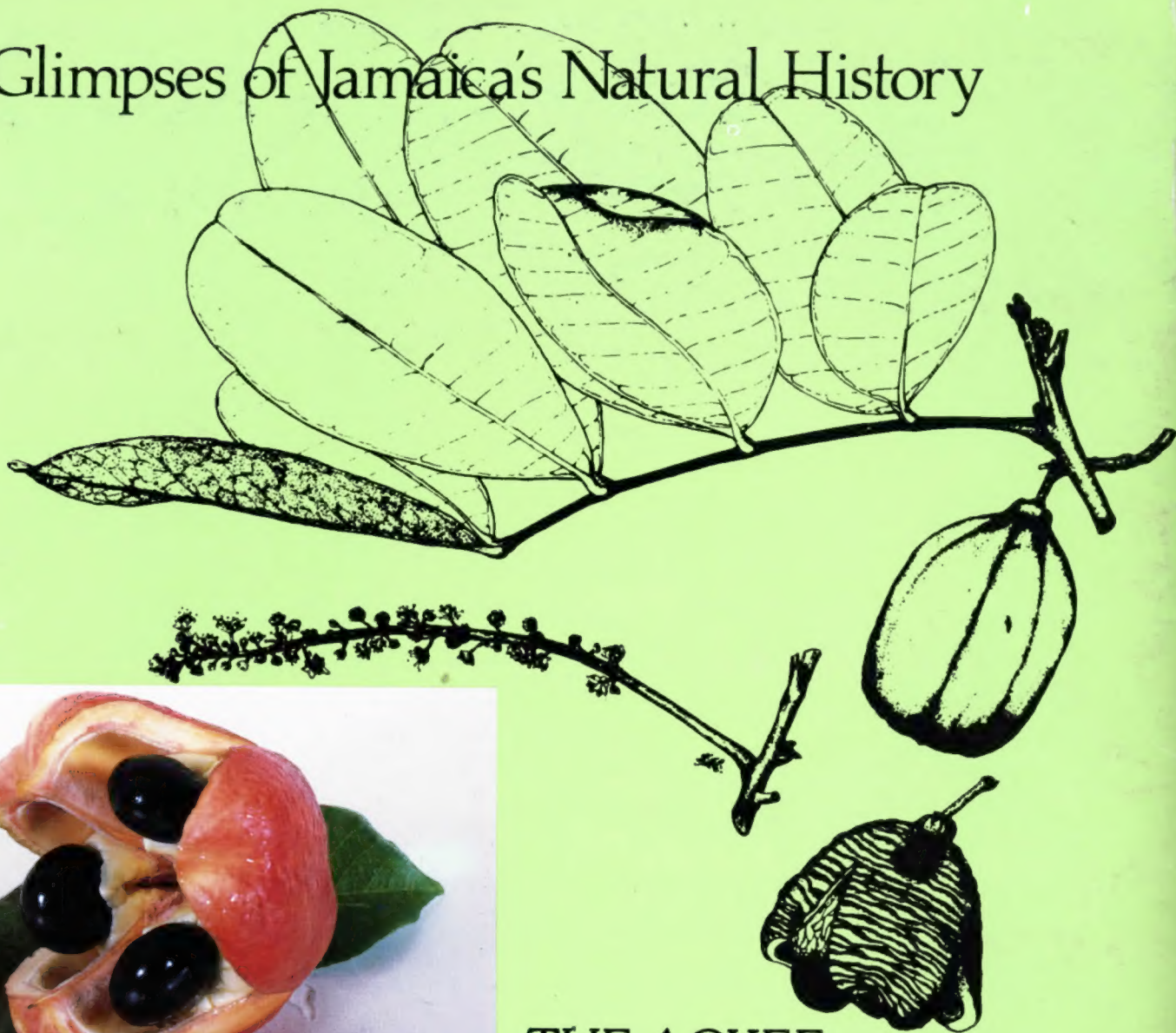
times on the facade. On either side of the main entrance are relief sculptures depicting tragedy and comedy.

The theatre seats 800 on three levels — parquette (ground floor), dress circle (lower balcony) and the gallery.

The Ward Theatre Foundation was recently established to raise funds for the restoration and maintenance of this historic building.



# Glimpses of Jamaica's Natural History



## THE ACKEE

*Blighia sapida*



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The ackee, Jamaica's national fruit, is native to West Africa and was brought to Jamaica on a slave ship about 1778. It is now naturalized in Jamaica and is widely cultivated for its edible fruit. The name 'Akee' is from Ashanti.

When the ackee was brought to Jamaica, it had no scientific name. It wasn't until 1806 that it was officially described and named *Blighia* in honour of Capt. Bligh who had taken the ackee and other plants from Jamaica to Kew, England, for cultivation and study in 1793. The specific name *sapida*, refers to the edible quality of the fruit.

The ackee is an erect evergreen tree 9-15m high with shiny light green leaves and small fragrant white flowers and is most attractive when in fruit. The fruits are a showy drooping red fleshy three-angled capsule.

The edible part of the fruit is the large creamy-white fleshy aril attached to the base of the black shiny seed, and it can be poisonous if not properly prepared before cooking. The poisonous part is the red membrane which is attached to the edible aril. This red membrane must be carefully removed before cooking.

Jamaica is one of the few places where the ackee is widely eaten and commonly cultivated. The tree is rare or absent in many of the other West Indian islands.

The fruit gives a lather in water and is at times used as a substitute for soap.

Natural History Division  
Institute of Jamaica